















THE  
WORLD UNMASK'D:  
OR, THE  
*Philosopher the greatest Cheat;*  
IN  
Twenty-Four DIALOGUES

Between CRITO a Philosopher, PHILO a  
Lawyer, and ERASTUS a Merchant.

In which

True VIRTUE is distinguished from what usually  
bears the Name or Resemblance of it:

The many Prejudices and Mistakes in Judgment and  
Practice, in regard to CONSCIENCE and  
RELIGION, are examined and rectified:

And the Value of TRUTH is shewn; with the Reasons  
why it is not more generally known.

To which is added,

The STATE of SOULS separated from  
their BODIES:

Being an EPISTOLARY TREATISE, wherein is proved,  
by a Variety of Arguments, deduced from Holy Scripture, that  
the PUNISHMENTS of the WICKED will not be ETERNAL;  
and all Objections against it solved.

In Answer to a Treatise, entitled,

An Enquiry into ORIGENISM.

Together with

A Large INTRODUCTION, evincing the same Truth  
from the Principles of Natural Religion.

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*Translated from the French.*

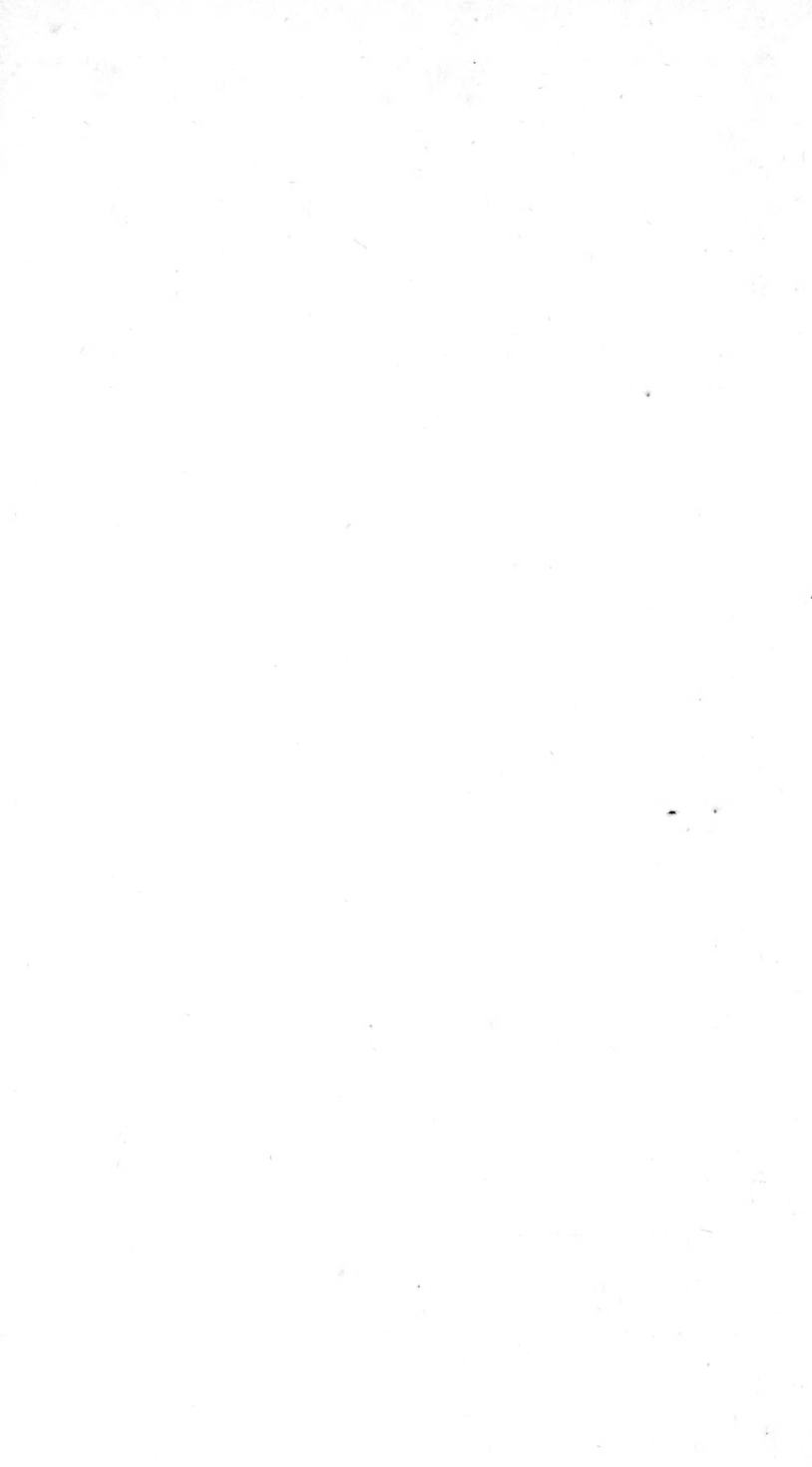
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T O T H E  
B O O K S E L L E R.

**T**HESSE Dialogues having been communicated to me, I thought you wou'd not be displeased with giving them to the Public. Perhaps, on perusing them, you will have some reason to believe they may turn to Account.

*Novelty has Charms for the whole World. In these Pieces every thing is new, except only the Substance or Essence of Truth, which cannot be so. To which it may be added, the Form of them is Original; and it would be no easy matter to find any thing already written in this way.*

*An Attempt of this nature may, perhaps, startle some honest Persons of the old Stamp, who lose all patience at the bare mention of the Term Novelty; but they may elsewhere find wherewithal to satisfy their Taste for Antiquity.*



*I very much fear, that Persons of too much Gravity will soon be disgusted at the Gaiety of the Stile. If so, they will not want Books that are more grave as to the Stile than the Matter.*

*The Methodical Learned will meet with nothing here to their mind. They will to no purpose look for Method in Dialogues, which are managed in a Walk. Every thing favours of that Ease and Liberty, which the Walk and the Air they breathe, in the Spring, produce among intimate Friends.*

*You will be able to judge, when you read them, whether the Number of Persons of this latter Taste, will prevail over those of the opposite Taste.*

*I am, Sir, &c.*

A LETTER from a Friend of the Author. To Mr. D \* \* \* \*

S I R,

**I** Here send you the Manuscript Dialogues, which you desired of me. You want to know my Thoughts on them. Is it reasonable that I should prevent your Judgment; wou'd it not be more equitable to allow you to see things with your own Eyes.

*What*

*What you had been told of them began to give you some Prejudice against them; so that I may have some right to justify them so far, as to reduce you to an Equilibrium. However, I shall not enter on that Task; it wou'd be proceeding against the Design of this Work, which requires no Apology, and, perhaps, will not easily admit of one.*

*Here, Sir, I ought to explain myself. An Attempt to justify the Substance of self-evident Truths, is a mere Banter. An Attempt to justify things that are barely accidental, and only different manners of viewing, or explaining the True, wou'd be superfluous; since the Author himself justifies them only in that respect. He gives his Thoughts only as a sort of Conjectures, or if you please, as Reveries; by the help of which, every Man considers the True in itself. To pretend to justify the Form of them, wou'd be to undertake an Impossibility; for to justify it to the Taste of some Persons, wou'd be to incur the Censure of several others. Men of Gravity cannot bear the justification of the Pleasantry and Gaicty, which reigns among the Actors of these Pieces; at least, they will be displeased*

*sed to see them talk in that Strain on the most serious Subjects; of this sort is their Discourse on Truth or Religion.*

*On the other hand, Persons of a gay Turn of Mind, who have been used to exercise their Humour on Nothings, or frivolous Pleasantries, (Persons to whom Truth appears gloomy, because they are unacquainted with it, and grow melancholy on the least Attention to the True, which carries them out of their Element) such Persons, I say, will not allow a Man to justify the Serious of the Subjects here examin'd to the bottom, and which, consequently, require some Attention.*

*Persons of this Character may indeed be more tractable than those of the contrary Character: without renouncing Gaiety or Pleasantry, which is inseparable from it, they may contract a familiarity with Truth, and come at last to have a relish of it, and be pleased with it as their own Element, as the Element of Joy and Serenity.*

*These Dialogues, by a small Sample, shew this is not impossible: and it appears that the Friends here introduced, do not quit their own Element, even when they are most attentive on explaining the Substance of Truth.*

*Those*

*Those who employ their Genius on abstract Subjects, will here find nothing that demands too much of their Application. If they are such as are satisfied with Ideas rather than Words, and require Precision in Ideas, without trifling on Expressions; they will find some Strokes which will not displease them.*

*If they are accustomed to distinguish what is Original, from what is borrowed or foisted in, they will easily excuse several Irregularities, which wou'd be unpardonable in a Man of Study; but are pardonable in a Reveur, or one who delivers his Thoughts only as Reveries\*. Such as cannot relish the True, unless it is treated geometrically, or with a rigorous Exactness of Terms, will never be able to like so immethodical a way of Writing.*

*The impatient Part of Mankind, who decide without understanding the drift of a Discourse; will here have fresh Occasion to exert themselves. As most of the Subjects are only slightly touched on, by Strokes which rather give a glimpse of*

\* In the seventeenth and eighteenth Dialogues, the Reader may see what gave Occasion to the Terms *Reveur* and *Reveries*.

*Truth, than unfold it to View, their Precipitation will give them frequent Opportunities of pronouncing this or that false.*

*Devotées of a certain kind, who can relish nothing that relates to Religion, unless it be supported with a croud of Scripture-Quotations, will certainly disapprove of the Omission of such Passages.*

*You see now, Sir, how impossible it wou'd be to succeed in justifying the Dialogues to Persons of different Tastes. It is better to leave every one the Liberty of judging for himself, if every one can be allow'd that Liberty. By that Liberty, I mean an impartial Disposition, or perfect Neutrality, not determin'd by any secret Inclination or private Interest to pronounce pro or con. No other Liberty seems to me sufficient for being a competent Judge; because without that, a Man wou'd be at once Judge and Party.*

I am, &c.

N. B. This Volume is a complete Translation of the two Volumes of Dialogues, and two of Letters.



T H E

## World Unmasked;

O R, T H E

PHILOSOPHER the greatest Cheat.

## D I A L O G U E I.

PHILO, a *Lawyer*; CRITO, a *Philosopher*; and  
ERASTUS, a *Merchant*.

*Philo.* **D**EAR *Erastus*, I am told you are much changed since I saw you last; that you are become a *Devoté* or *Pietist*.

*Crito.* It is matter of surprize to several; but it wou'd be still more so, if you could gain us over to the same Party?

*Erastus.* That wou'd be pleasant indeed; especially, if I should gain you without attempting it.

*Crito.* How, *Erastus*! wou'd you have so little Zeal, as not to endeavour to make Profelytes, and increase your Party?

B

*Erastus.*

*Eraſtus.* Were I of any Party, the Honour that wou'd be done me by ſuch Proſelytes as you, wou'd not allow me to neglect them.

*Philo.* But is the World really miſtaken, *Eraſtus*, in imagining you are become a *Devoté* or *Pietiſt*?

*Eraſtus.* When you have had your Jeſt out, I'll ſpeak ſeriouſly; in the mean time, I aſſure you I claim neither of thoſe Appellations.

*Philo.* How ſo, *Eraſtus*? Is it becauſe they do you not honour enough?

*Eraſtus.* That is not the Reaſon, *Philo.* When taken in a favourable Senſe, they wou'd do me too much; in any other Senſe, they would be the direct contrary of my Character.

*Crito.* How then do you underſtand them, *Eraſtus*?

*Eraſtus.* Thus: The Appellation of *Devoté*, taken in a good Senſe, ought to denote a Perſon devoted to God: and that of a *Pietiſt*, a pious Perſon; which comes to the ſame. In this Senſe, as I ſaid before, they wou'd do me too much Honour; and I am far from aſſuming them. In the vulgar Senſe, the Appellation of *Devoté* denotes a Bigot, and very often a Hypocrite; as that of *Pietiſt*, denotes one poſſeſſed with a Party-Spirit, one out of humour with all Mankind, and who ſtudies to diſtinguiſh himſelf on a Principle of Vanity. I own, I do not take this to be my Character. Pray, tell me, Gentlemen, in which of theſe two Senſes, you have beſtow'd the Title of *Pietiſt* or *Devoté* on me?

*Crito.* Not in the latter, you may be aſſur'd.

*Eraſtus.* Then it muſt be in the former.

*Philo.* Can that be a Queſtion, *Eraſtus*?

*Eraſtus.* If I take you right, your Character of a Perſon truly pious, comprehends a Zeal, or Party-Spirit, which endeavours to gain Proſelytes, or ſuch as cull themſelves ſo, in order to enlarge the Number of its Partizans. Are theſe your Notions of Piety?

*Crito.* Not altogether, I own.

*Philo.* They are ſtill leſs mine.

*Eraſtus.* Now *Crito* is beginning to contradict himſelf; I deſire he will be conſiſtent.



*Crito.* If I might be allow'd the Liberty, *Eraſtus*, I ſhould ſay you are a little malicious, in making your Friends fall into Contradictions.

*Eraſtus.* Not I, *Crito*; I only let them ſee it.

*Crito.* Since you are reſolv'd to give no Quarter, and muſt be answer'd directly, I ſhall freely own, that when I connect'd the Ideas of Piety with thoſe of Party-Zeal, I form'd only confus'd Notions, which preſented nothing diſtinct to my Mind.

*Philo.* I can ſay the ſame for myſelf, *Eraſtus*.

*Eraſtus.* I am ſurpriz'd that Philoſophers and Lawyers, Men who make profeſſion of advancing nothing but what they have diſtinct Ideas of, can be ſatisfied with what is confus'd and indeterminate.

*Philo.* You ſee, *Crito*, how he handles us.

*Crito.* It is no more, than what we in ſome meaſure deſerve, for beginning the Attack. But, Raillery apart; ſince you are not diſpos'd to paſs for a *Devoté*, either in the good or bad Senſe of that Term, I beg to know, *Eraſtus*, what you would paſs for.

*Philo.* For an honeſt Man, without doubt.

*Crito.* Or rather, for a good Man.

*Eraſtus.* Is it abſolutely neceſſary I ſhould paſs for ſomething? It is not my Inclination, dear *Crito*. I am of opinion, that one ought to think of becoming a good Man, before one pretends to paſs for ſuch.

*Crito.* Are you not a good Man then, *Eraſtus*?

*Eraſtus.* I may, perhaps, be enough ſo to bear the Name; but muſt own, that to be a good Man, according to my Idea, implies ſomething more than what is comprehended in the common Notion; in my way of thinking, a Man devoted to God and a good Man, are almoſt the ſame thing.

*Philo.* At that rate, there will be but few good Men among thoſe who would paſs for ſuch.

*Eraſtus.* One of the ſureſt Marks that a Man is not really ſuch, is a deſire of appearing ſo. A Man in Trade never takes more pains to appear rich, than when his Affairs are in the worſt Situation.

*Crito.* But I wou'd fain know, *Eraſtus*, how you came by theſe Thoughts. Who is the Maſter that has form'd ſo good a Scholar ?

*Eraſtus.* Should I tell you, *Crito*, you wou'd perhaps endeavour to exceed me, as you did formerly at College. I have not forgot your Superiority in Learning ; and how do you know but I may be capable of Jealouſy ?

*Philo.* If there is any reaſon to fear *Crito* on that ſcore, you muſt allow it is not the ſame in regard to me, and that you may communicate your Secret to me without any danger.

*Eraſtus.* *Philo*, I have not much leſs reaſon to miſtruſt you. The Lawyers are a Set of Gentlemen, who go through with all they undertake. What wou'd become of a poor Trader, divided between a thouſand Cares and Articles of Buſineſs, if he fell into the hands of two ſuch Philoſophers as you ?

*Philo.* Really, *Crito*, I am at a loſs what courſe to take for getting any thing out of him.

*Eraſtus.* It ſhall be your own fault, *Philo*, if you do not oblige me to answer you. Had you ſpoke to me ſeriouſly, I ſhould have answer'd you in the ſame Strain. Perhaps you imagin'd that, ſince the World has been pleas'd to beſtow on me the Character of a *Pietiſt*, I had loſt all reliſh for Raillery.

*Crito.* You have too much natural Senſe, *Eraſtus*, to be ſo ſoon ſtupified with *Pietiſm* or *Devotion*.

*Eraſtus.* Hold, *Crito*, is it in the good, or in the bad Senſe that *Pietiſm* or *Devotion* ſtupifies a Man.

*Crito.* You ſtop me ſhort, *Eraſtus* ; and I own, have again caught me in the Confuſed, and ſpeaking according to vulgar Opinions.

*Philo.* You might have pleaded in your Defence, *Crito*, that when you ſuppoſed *Devotion* could ſtupify, it was in the bad Senſe of the Word.

*Crito.* That, *Philo*, wou'd have been but a poor Defence ; and I ſhould have contradicted myſelf again.

*Philo.* And where lies the Contradiſtion ?

*Crito.*

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*Crito.* It would have been but too plain ; I just now told *Erastus*, that I gave him the Appellation of a *Devoté* in the good Sense only ; and here I must have supposed him such in the bad ; for a Devotion that stupifies, is of that kind.

*Erastus.* *Crito* doth himself Justice with a very good Grace. He has spared me the trouble of pointing out a Contradiction in his Discourse ; on which Occasion I should have shewn him no Favour.

*Crito.* I am very sensible of that, *Erastus* ; and in return for your Care, I promise you the same good Office on the first Opportunity.

*Erastus.* Well ; this is acting like Friends ; and I shall be very sensible of the Obligation : but I see *M.* coming to look for me.

*Philo.* Will you leave us so soon then, *Erastus* ?

*Erastus.* I depend on meeting you again, *Philo* : I promised to be at a Friend's House at Five ; you had made me forget the Appointment ; give me leave to be as good as my Word.

*Crito.* We will ; but on condition that you do the same to us, *Erastus*. Promise us then to meet us at Three to-morrow in our favourite Walk.

*Erastus.* I will certainly be there, if I can.

## DIALOGUE II.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **I** Thought I was too late, *Philo* ; but I see *Erastus* is not yet come.

*Philo.* I think I see him at the bottom of this Alley, in company with another, whom I do not know.

*Crito.* You are mistaken, *Philo* ; he would have come alone ; and not brought us an Impertinent.

*Philo.* My Eyes are better than yours then, *Crito* : See, he is now taking his leave of him, and coming up to us.

*Crito.* I perceive it, though confusedly ; and am  
B 3 glad

glad he doth not bring his Companion with him; a fourth Person would have been troublesome to us.

*Philo.* What think you of our Friend, since Yesterday's Conversation?

*Crito.* I know not what I think of him, *Philo*; all I know of the matter is, that I have been all day impatient for the Hour of Meeting, and fear'd it at the same time. But what do you think of him yourself?

*Philo.* I will tell you another time; he is near enough to over-hear us.

*Crito, to Erastus.* Well met, Sir: We imagined ourselves here before you; but I find we were mistaken. Who was you with just now, pardon my Curiosity; did you leave him on our account?

*Erastus.* I was with a Friend, whom I can quit to join others, and without fear of his taking it amiss.

*Philo.* His Name, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* His Name is *Sermus*.

*Crito.* I am not unacquainted with that Name; and, if I am not mistaken, I knew him formerly at School.

*Philo.* May I be allow'd to ask you, *Erastus*, whether he is a *Pietist*, or not.

*Crito.* I had the same Curiosity; but laid a restraint on my self, being apprehensive of a Question concerning the good, or bad Sense.

*Erastus.* The World is pleas'd to call him so; but that gives him very little Concern.

*Crito.* But tell me, my dear Friend; what sort of People are those pretended *Pietists*? I have heard such different Accounts of them, that I should be glad to find a Man who could give me their true Character.

*Erastus.* That is much such a Question, *Crito*, as if I should ask you what sort of People are the *Christians*.

*Crito.* The *Christians* are so numerous, that an Infinity of Distinctions would be necessary for characterizing them.

*Erastus.* The *Pietists*, though not very numerous, are of so different Characters, that we must make as many Distinctions as there are Persons. But I am poorly qualified to talk of them; for most of what I know, is only by Report.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* You are very far then from being engaged in their Party, as several imagine.

*Erasmus.* Engaged in a Party, *Philo!* All good Men, or, if you please, the *Pietists*, in the good Sense of the Word, detest the Choice of a Party or Sect.

*Philo.* They seem, however, to affect a Way of living very different from that of the rest of Mankind.

*Erasmus.* Dear *Philo*, you seem to attack them with a View of engaging me in their Defence.

*Crito.* They would be in very good hands, had they such an Advocate as you.

*Philo.* I own I should take a pleasure in hearing you plead their Cause.

*Erasmus.* Were I as able an Advocate as *Philo*, I would consider whether I ought to undertake it, or not.

*Philo.* You are always on the Barter, *Erasmus*; but, Raillery apart, may we not be favoured with your Thoughts on those People?

*Erasmus.* What can a Man positively think, *Philo*, of People whom he knows only by the Report of others. I own, all my Thoughts of them will amount only to Possibilities.

*Philo.* What mean you by that, *Erasmus*?

*Erasmus.* I think it very possible the World may be entirely mistaken, in the Judgment it forms of them: that those whom it most despises, are perhaps the most valuable Part of Mankind: that those whom it represents as Fanatics, are Persons of the soundest Sense, and the nicest Discernment. I likewise think it very possible that, among those who bear that Name, there may be Characters of all sorts: some well-meaning Persons who are only Apes of others; some who make a good Beginning, and a bad Ending: some who sincerely do what they believe their Consciences require; and some, who are void of Integrity, and after being seduced themselves, seduce others. I farther think it possible for Villains to assume the Name and Appearances of *Pietism*, that they may gain their Ends with more privacy. Now, *Philo*, I ask you in my turn, what

think you of those People? Will you be their Advocate? You are more fit for that Office than I am.

*Philo.* In that Case, I must be equally fit to undertake good and bad Causes.

*Crito.* *Erastus* mauls us off; he lets us see what ridiculous Questions we ask him about the *Pietists*.

*Erastus.* Suppose, *Philo*, that you and I were to go to a Lapidary's Shop, and upon the bare sight of the Note on the Bag, I should ask you, what you think of the true and false Stones in it: What Answer would you make me?

*Philo.* I own, I should think this Question somewhat absurd. I perceive what you drive at, *Erastus*, and need not wait for the Explanation of the Riddle.

*Erastus.* You very well know that in the World Men value themselves on Justness of Thought; have you never heard Persons of that Character deal in Questions and Answers still more ridiculous?

*Crito.* The Ladies, *Erastus*, are particularly excellent in that Art; if their Discourse happens to fall on the poor *Pietists*, they paint them in fine Colours.

*Erastus.* It would be pleasant to write down their Conversation on that Article.

*Crito.* I will, some time or other, give my self that Diversion; but, if I am not mistaken, I see somebody coming towards us.

*Erastus.* What is his Name, *Crito*?

*Crito.* *Parmenas*, one of our Senators; certainly you must know him.

*Erastus.* I know him only by Reputation; What is his Character?

*Philo.* That of strongly interesting himself in what concerns himself; and little, or not at all, in what regards others.

*Erastus.* Do you not think, *Philo*, that most of those whom the World calls honest Men, are of the same Class?

*Philo.* I cannot tell, *Erastus*; but I should be very much displeased with my self, were that my Character.

*Erastus.* You think then, *Philo*, that you have a  
much

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much more disinterested Regard for your Friends.

*Philo.* I am very sensible that Self-Love has some share in it; but methinks, I should be capable of serving my Friends at the expence of my own Interest.

*Crito.* Perhaps, *Philo*, it would be on condition, that Interest was not of the greatest Concern.

*Philo.* You set but little value on the Friendship of your Friends, *Crito*.

*Crito.* I set so great a value on yours, that I would not put it to too severe a Trial; we must be careful of what we prize.

*Philo.* Till now I flatter'd my self with having in you a Friend proof against all Trials. Tell me then what Dependance I ought to have on your Friendship, since you have so little on mine.

*Crito.* It would be unjust, *Philo*, to hold up my Friendship above its Price. I will own frankly, that I have a Friend to whom I refer all others. This Friend is *Self*. I know not whether you are acquainted with him or not. Provided that Friend and *Philo* never appear in competition, the latter may depend on my Friendship in its utmost extent, and so far put it to the trial. Should I promise more in the Affair of Friendship, I own my Professions would be mere Quackery.

*Philo.* What do you think of a Friend like this, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* I think, *Philo*, I could more safely depend on his interested Friendship, than on the Protestations of Disinterestedness made by several others. There are certainly more Quacks in the Business of Friendship, than there are Retailers of infallible Remedies. *Crito*, at least, promises only what he can and will perform. Is not this plain Dealing?

*Crito.* I find *Philo* is not very well satisfied with my Offers of Friendship; he is angry with me, perhaps, for disabusing him of the beautiful Idea he entertain'd of it. However, I have done him a Service, in thus discharging him of the Obligation, under which he would have lain, to make me a Return.



*Pbilo.* Were you not so severe, I could tell you that the Confession you have made, shall not at all diminish my Friendship for you; but you will not take my Word for it, so that I had better wait for an Opportunity of proving what I say by Facts.

*Crito.* Do you think, *Pbilo*, that considerable Services done to a Friend, are always Proofs of great Disinterestedness? For my part, who do not commend myself, I find myself very capable of serving my Friends to a certain Point; Self-Love takes all Coin for current; and I know, &c.

*Eraſtus.* *Crito*, have you read what *M. De la Rochefoucault* says on Self-Love?

*Crito.* Yes, *Eraſtus*, and frequently found my own Character there. Among other Maxims, I the other day met with this: *Self-Love seems to forget it self, when we are labouring for another's Advantage; but it is only lending upon Usury, under pretence of giving. The most disinterested Love, says the same Writer, is no better than a Trade, an Exchange of good Offices in which Self-Love always proposes some Gain to it self.*

*Eraſtus.* I am afraid, my dear Friends, if we make too close an Enquiry into Friendship and Self-Love, the latter will put the former to flight. Let us not endeavour to see too far into the matter; we may be undeceived in a manner that will mortify us.

*Pbilo.* Nothing could be better said, *Eraſtus*; we have so many unavoidable Opportunities of seeing ourselves in a bad Likeness, why should we seek for more? Let us not be such Enemies to our own Repose.

*Crito.* Do you not observe, *Pbilo*, that *Eraſtus* banters us? He speaks the Language of Self-Love, which is not willing to be seen too near.

*Pbilo.* I am ready to excuse him, on condition that you both sup with me to-night.

*Eraſtus.* A very hard Bargain!

*Pbilo.* I make another, *Eraſtus*; that we all three forget we have any Self-Love about us.

## DIALOGUE III.

PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.

*Philo.* **H**AVE you been long here, *Eraſtus* ?  
*Eraſtus.* An Hour and a Quarter, if I am not miſtaken.

*Philo.* You are a very early Riſer ; we imagined we had done Wonders in your favour, and ſhould be here as ſoon as you.

*Crito.* You ſaw the Sun riſe, no doubt.

*Eraſtus.* I ſaw the Day break, and found the Sight well worth ſome hours Sleep. Beſides, the Spring is ſo ſhort a Seaſon, and at the ſame time ſo lovely in my eyes, that I was reſolved to make the beſt of it.

*Philo.* It is a beautiful Emblem of Youth ; which paſſes ſtill quicker than the Spring.

*Eraſtus.* And almoſt always before we think of making the beſt of it.

*Crito.* Had any Man but *Eraſtus* talk'd in this manner, I ſhould imagine he regretted his not having had his ſhare of Pleaſure. In that Caſe, it would be high time to make up for what has been loſt.

*Eraſtus.* I do really regret my not having made all the Advantage I might have done of my Youth ; and my Miſtakes in the Matter of Pleaſures.

*Philo.* You always confined your ſelf to ſuch moderate Pleaſures, *Eraſtus*, that one might charge you rather with taking too little than too much. When Pleaſures are innocent, they become Youth perfectly well.

*Eraſtus.* What do you mean by innocent Pleaſures, *Philo* ?

*Philo.* Should I tell you, *Eraſtus*, they are ſuch Pleaſures as have nothing criminal, you would laugh at my Definition.

*Eraſtus.* I own it would make me ſmile ; but I ſhould be convinced you did not ſpeak ſeriouſly.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* By such a Definition, *Philo* would have informed *Erastus* that White is not Black.

*Philo.* I am too well acquainted with *Erastus*, to think of satisfying him so easily. But I own that, the more I seek for an exact Definition of innocent Pleasures, the farther I am from the Discovery. I imagine I could better tell what they are not, than what they are.

*Erastus.* I am not surprized at that; because the Term *Innocent* is negative, and expresses nothing in particular; unless it be that a thing is not criminal. It must be agreed that we often bring our selves off by loose and indeterminate Expressions, which clear up the Difficulty almost as well, as when we say White is not Black.

*Philo.* Men do not look so nicely into Matters, *Erastus*.

*Crito.* We should, perhaps, be displeas'd, if certain Truths were unfolded to our View.

*Philo.* However, *Erastus*, give us your Thoughts concerning the Nature of innocent Pleasures; or, if you please, of such Pleasures as are not criminal.

*Erastus.* Pray tell me, *Philo*, are not the Terms Criminal and Culpable, synonymous?

*Philo.* Without doubt.

*Erastus.* Why is it not said that a Pleasure is culpable, as well as that a Pleasure is innocent?

*Philo.* Because the Title of Culpable is applicable only to a moral Being; whereas Pleasure is not properly a Being, but the Modification of a Being.

*Erastus.* If a Modification cannot be called culpable, can it be called innocent?

*Philo.* I own, *Erastus*, that *Innocent* being contrary to *Culpable*, neither of those Terms can be applied to a Modification.

*Erastus.* You told us, *Philo*, that Pleasure is only a Modification of a Being.

*Philo.* I say so again, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* You will grant then, *Philo*, that Pleasure is, properly speaking, neither *innocent* nor *criminal*.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* I am obliged to grant it.

*Erastus.* And that the Terms *Innocent* and *Criminal* belong only to a moral Being, of which Pleasure is but a Modification.

*Philo.* I must grant that too.

*Erastus.* On that foot, you will not for the future ask me for a Definition of innocent Pleasures, or such as are not criminal.

*Philo.* I know not, *Erastus*, how I can ask it ; and yet I am not inclined to excuse you.

*Crito.* If I am not much mistaken, *Erastus* unravels the Difficulty very well ; but at the same time maliciously pretends he cannot get over it.

*Erastus.* I appeal to you, *Crito* ; is not *Philo* more malicious than I, in forcing a poor Trader out of his Sphere, to entangle him in metaphysical Questions, which do not fall under his Cognizance ? He can gain no Honour by the Victory. If in return, a Man should drag *Philo* out of his Element, and employ him in Exchanges, Arbitrations, the Price of Silks, &c. I should be in some measure revenged of him.

*Philo.* You are sufficiently so without, *Erastus* ; and I see it is no easy matter to gain an Advantage over you.

*Crito.* *Erastus* would fain give us the slip, I perceive, and decline telling us his Opinion ; but he must explain himself, though against his Will. It is not civil thus to drop one's Friends on the Road.

*Erastus.* Pray, *Crito*, take notice that *Philo* engaged me in the Journey by starting the Question about innocent Pleasures ; it is his Business to pursue the Subject. Whereabouts did we leave off, *Philo* ?

*Philo.* We had agreed that only a moral Being can be criminal or innocent.

*Crito.* At that rate, we are to discard the Terms *Innocent* and *Criminal*, so much in use.

*Erastus.* I confess I should be pleased, if one could avoid employing them. They always carry something ambiguous, which obscures the Truth. However, as Terms stand for no more than the Ideas fix'd to them, they

they might still be admitted, provided Men were first agreed on their true Signification.

*Philo.* What Sense would you give them, *Eraſtus* ?

*Eraſtus.* Were there an absolute Neceſſity of giving them any, I ſhould ſay that Pleaſures become more or leſs innocent by the Diſpoſition of the Heart which reſiſhes them.

*Crito.* I am entirely of your mind, *Eraſtus*. I never was ſatiſfied with the Diſtinctions introduced by Divines in regard to lawful and unlawful Pleaſures.

*Philo.* I always thought ſome of them made the Way too ſmooth, and others too rough.

*Eraſtus.* They have cut themſelves out a great deal of Work, which they might have avoided, had they referred every Man to his own Conſcience for Satisfaction in this point.

*Philo.* That muſt be own'd, *Eraſtus* ; but on the other hand, is not this Way of blind Obedience to Conſcience, expoſed to great Dangers, and numberleſs Illuſions ? We have ſeen Men pretend to juſtify themſelves in the moſt manifeſt Licentiousneſs, under pretence that their Conſciences, as they ſaid, accuſed them of nothing.

*Eraſtus.* The beſt and ſureſt Way cannot ſecure a Man from voluntary Illuſions. Do you know any Way, *Philo*, that is inacceſſible to Illuſion, and where a Heart willing to be miſled, may not be ſeduced ?

*Philo.* I ſhould be very much puzzled to find ſuch an one ; and am pretty well ſatiſfied, that Perſons moſt ſkilful and penetrating in what relates to others, are the Bubbles of their own Illuſions ; but I ſee no Remedy for this Evil, nor how one can get clear of it.

*Eraſtus.* Why, would you not look on Conſcience as the Key to this Labyrinth, *Philo* ?

*Philo.* We muſt firſt enquire what Conſcience is.

*Eraſtus.* Do not expect Definitions of Conſcience from me ; I ſhall leave that Task to Divines, if they think themſelves equal to it : for my part, I am ſatiſfied with the Knowledge I have of it from my own Sentiments and Experience. You aſk'd me the other day,

*Crito.*

*Crito*, under what able Master's Tuition I had placed my self. I shall now answer your Question: That Master is Conscience, I neither know nor will have any other.

*Philo*. You surprise me, *Erastus*; I know not whether I am to take your Word for it or not.

*Crito*. I should mistrust any one else, who talked in this manner; but *Erastus* is a Man of too much Veracity to be suspected of Disimulation. I perceive I shall soon have a very different Opinion of that Master than I have hitherto entertain'd.

*Erastus*. I know not whether you are serious or not, *Crito*; but this Master is near enough to overhear you.

*Crito*. I am very serious, *Erastus*; and am extremely angry with my self for not having hitherto set a greater Value on such a Master, nor given Attention to his Lessons. I see what might be obtained with most ease, is most neglected.

*Philo*. You will take it ill perhaps if I interrupt your Conversation, with asking the Hour of the Day.

*Erastus*. I think it is time to go home with *Crito*, and make him treat us with a Breakfast.

*Crito*. I am a pleasant Fellow. I had really forgot what I promised you last Night, and did not consider *Erastus* was here long before us; but that is your own fault, *Erastus*, and therefore blame no body but your self for it.

## DIALOGUE IV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito*. WE are first to-day.

*Philo*. *Erastus* must have over-slept himself, or is detain'd by some unreasonable Visitor.

*Crito*. Would you imagine, *Philo*, that since the Arrival of *Erastus*, I cannot pass one Day without seeing him; though he is pretty severe upon me, his Conversation

sation becomes every Day more agreeable to me.

*Philo.* His Change has not produced in him the Effect I expected. I was told he was grown gloomy, melancholly, and unfit for all Conversation. I never saw him so gay, nor behave himself in so engaging a manner.

*Crito.* Though he has always been gay, it was not in so free and easy a manner. I know not what can be the Cause of it; but it is visible he has a Fund of Serenity within, which, if one dared, one would envy him.

*Philo.* Were all the *Pietists* like him, every Man would be one; and the Appellation would be no longer a Bugbear.

*Crito.* I do not know that, *Philo.* Men would willingly enjoy his Gayety and Serenity; but I question whether they would, like him, obey the Voice of Conscience in every particular, and on all Occasions. Do we know what it has already cost him, and what it may cost him hereafter?

*Philo.* Not I, *Crito*; but methinks it is the Duty of every honest Man to obey his Conscience, and I should be very sorry to disobey mine.

*Crito.* Some time ago, I could have talked like you, *Philo*; but I have since observed that I endeavoured to work my self into a State of Insensibility, that I might not hear its Voice. But do not I see *Erastus* coming this way?

*Philo.* It is he, unless my Eyes deceive me.

*Crito.* I grow a little impatient to see him, and engage him a second time on the Subject of Yesterday's Conversation.

*Philo.* That of innocent Pleasures, or that of Conscience?

*Crito.* Both; though taking the matter right, they come to one and the same.

*Philo.* How so, *Crito*?

*Crito.* Because it is the Business of every Man's Conscience to determine what may be innocent for him.

*Philo.* You seem'd to jest the other day, *Crito*, when you ask'd under what able Master *Erastus* had studied; but I see you are in good earnest taking the way to become learned in the same School.

*Crito.*



*Crito.* Banter as much as you please, *Philo*; I heartily wish I had Courage enough, or that the Work would not cost me too much; you should then see whether I would not attempt it.

*Philo.* But should a Philosopher like you, *Crito*, be stoppt by Difficulties? Where would be the Courage to attempt only what gives no trouble?

*Crito.* Your Raillery, dear *Philo*, is a good Lesson for me; and when my Courage increases, I shall be more obliged to you than you imagine. (*To Erastus.*) My dear Friend, you are come very seasonably, to assist me in defending my self against a Man who attacks me vigorously.

*Erastus.* Is it a formal Duel, or some malicious Surprise?

*Crito.* There is a good deal of Malice in the Affair; and *Philo* is the Aggressor.

*Philo.* I am an Aggressor, to whom, by his own Confession, he has more Obligation than is imagined. Reconcile that, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* I understand neither of you, except you explain your selves.

*Crito.* I'll tell you, *Erastus*; we were on the Topick of yesterday's Conversation; I mean Conscience and innocent Pleasures. I asserted that they both came to the same; because it is the Business of every Man's Conscience to direct him in that point.

*Erastus.* I think your Definition very just, *Crito*.

*Crito.* I met with a very civil Return for it; he has banter'd me on my Progress in the same School with you; and I frankly acknowledge, I wanted nothing but Courage, and was afraid the Work would be too painful. This was sufficient for drawing a new Thrust upon me. He has been laughing at the Greatness of my Courage, which dares attempt only what will give me no trouble.

*Erastus.* Really, *Crito*, I think *Philo* does you a good Office in attacking you after this manner.

*Crito.* True; if I knew how to make my advantage of it.

*Philo.* We were talking ill of you, *Erastus*, before you came.

*Erastus.* It is not obliging to speak ill of one's Friends in their absence, unless the Discourse is continued before their faces.

*Philo.* We were observing that *Piety* had made no alteration in your usual Gaiety, and that you had not put on the sour, gloomy Air of the generality of *Devotees*.

*Erastus.* Is there any necessity of joining the Idea of Sourness and Gloominess with that of *Piety*? I must own I see no Connection between them.

*Crito.* It is the common Opinion ; and most People tacitly think as much.

*Erastus.* Hold there, *Crito* ; it is an Impression which we receive in our Infancy, from the manner in which we have been catechised on the Articles of Religion or *Piety*.

*Crito.* You have hit it, *Erastus* ; the Care which seems to be taken for inspiring Children with Sentiments of *Piety*, is what gives them the greatest Aversion to it.

*Erastus.* Thus Hypocrites, and Dissemblers are form'd, who are dispos'd to give themselves some Consolation by Religion or the Appearance of it, while they are at an immense distance from all that constitutes its Reality.

*Philo.* However, Men profess a sovereign hatred of Dissimulation and Hypocrisy ; for which reason they cannot bear the false Devotees.

*Erastus.* The World has good reason for not bearing false Devotees. I will venture to affirm, they are the most despicable of Men ; but most of those honest Men, who value themselves on detesting Dissimulation, may possibly have a sovereign Hatred for it in others, without perceiving what share they have of it themselves. You must own that the wisest, most polite part of the World, and most regular in Appearance, is a Set of Men in disguise, who endeavour to impose one on another, not one of them daring to shew himself such as he really is.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* If you give the wisest, and most regular Part of the World such a Character; what will you say, *Erastus*, of the foolish disorderly Part, and such as are intirely devoted to their Passions.

*Erastus.* I will say, *Philo*, that the Distance between the wise and the foolish World, is in reality very inconsiderable. I can speak by Experience, having been formerly an Actor in the wise World: Self-Love is the grand Spring, which equally puts both into motion. The only difference is, that in the wise World, Self-Love has learnt the Art of disguising itself, and dressing itself in all manner of Colours, so as to pass unknown. Gravity, Reserve, an Air of Modesty, Complaisance, Generosity, a Readiness to do Services, an Air of Disinterestedness, and even of Freedom, are the several Colours, in which it finds its account. If any one chances to discover it under these Disguises, it conceals itself in another manner; it declaims against itself, detects several of its own Artifices; and ridicules itself with so good a Grace, that no-body imagines this artful Passion is the Actor. This, *Philo*, is the side of the Medal, which gives us the Character of the wise World.

*Philo.* Pray let me see that which presents the Character of the foolish World.

*Erastus.* Here it is, *Philo*. Self-Love is very coarsely cloath'd: It excites the Passions, without being at the trouble of disguising them, or giving them fine Names. It boldly shews itself capricious, passionate, voluptuous, revengeful, and even impious; Avarice and Envy, are the only Vices it is not willing to own; and that not without some reason. To do the wise World justice, those two excellent Qualities meet with much better Protection there than in the foolish World. Here now is the World masked, and the World unmasked; which of them is in your opinion the more valuable?

*Philo.* I should be very much puzzled to answer that Question?

*Crito.* Were I to give my Opinion, I should allow the

the World unmasked the preference; I own, it is not so agreeable for Society as the other; but, at least, it deceives no-body. I find in the World masked the Character of a Cheat, which I cannot bear.

*Philo.* You make a handsome Compliment to *Erastus*, who has own'd himself once an Actor in the wise World.

*Erastus.* Be not afraid of giving me Offence on that score; had I not discover'd the Falsity and Knavery of it, I should have continued to act there without knowing it.

*Philo.* Pray who has disgusted you of it, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* The very Master, I mention'd to you already.

*Philo.* What! Conscience?

*Erastus.* The same, dear *Philo*; you seem surpriz'd at it.

*Philo.* I can hardly believe it.

*Erastus.* How! Can you not conceive that a Witness, who resides within us, and follows us where-e'er we go, may easily unveil to us our most secret Intentions, if we will but give him the Hearing?

*Philo.* I begin to comprehend the matter.

*Erastus.* And that he may every moment give us the Lye, in regard to what we would appear to be, at the expence of Truth?

*Philo.* That is evident by Experience.

*Erastus.* If he speaks with so much Sincerity, even when we are afraid to hear him, how far will he lead us, when once we consent to be directed by him.

*Philo.* How far do you think he can lead us, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* Not only till he shews us within ourselves a Fund of Falsehood, a perpetual Disguise, a Desire of passing for what we are not; but even till he lets us see the Foundation and Principle of our best Dispositions, and finest Qualities, are no better than a most refined Self-Love, and a real Idolatry.

*Crito.* Well, *Philo*; had not I some reason to say just now, that a Man must have a great deal of Courage

rage to give himself up to the Direction of *Erastus's* Master?

*Erastus.* Pray tell me, *Philo* ; is not the wise World essentially the same at full length, as it is in little ?

*Philo.* I think so, *Erastus.*

*Erastus.* You will not therefore ask me a second time, how it is possible that the Witness in question, or, if you please, Conscience, can enable us to discover what the wise World is at full length. That question is sufficiently answer'd, by his enabling us to discover in ourselves what it is in little.

*Philo.* I begin to understand how far Conscience can lead us, provided we consent to its Direction ; and that by unveiling us to ourselves, it likewise unveils others to us. But might it not be objected, that the Diversity among Men is so great, that one cannot judge of another. We see, for example, a great deal of difference between the several Actors of the wise World.

*Erastus.* If there be any Difference or Diversity among them, as cannot be denied, it is only in Accidents and outward Forms, and not in the Substance or hidden Principle. While Man knows himself by the Form or Accidents only, he cannot by that means know other Men ; because they are in that respect very different one from another. But when Conscience has brought him to know himself by the Substance and Principle, he then knows the Substance and Principle of those of his own Class ; and it is easy for him to discern them through their apparent Diversity. You see now, *Philo*, why I advanced that Proposition : *That the wise World is essentially at full length, what it is in little* ; and that the Knowledge of the latter, as to its Essence, is sufficient for giving us the Knowledge of the former.

*Crito.* You pass in the World for a Merchant, *Erastus.*

*Erastus.* I pretend to nothing more, *Crito.*

*Crito.* I affirm, that you are more a Philosopher than we, and that we have no right to the Title.

*Erastus.* What do you mean by being a Philosopher ?

*Crito.* I mean, having what it is express'd by those Words written over the Gate of the Temple of *Delphos*: *Know thy Self.*

*Erastus.* If that is your Description of the true Philosopher, I own I wou'd fain be one.

*Crito.* Methinks, *Erastus*, you have already made a considerable Progress, and are an Honour to your Master. If you have had no other but Conscience, he must be a great Philosopher; and 'tis a Quality, which I did not before know belong'd to him.

*Philo.* You see, *Crito*, a Man may make new Discoveries every day.

*Crito.* You will take me for a very gross Philosopher, should I tell you it is time to think of the discovery of a Dinner. However, I venture to put you in mind of it, at the hazard of passing for what I really am: and it is one of the Maxims of this Master's Philosophy, not to pretend to pass for what one is not.

*Erastus.* If you follow his Maxims so exactly, even in the smallest Matters, *Crito*, you will make great progress in a little time. I am willing to be gross too on those Terms, and make no scruple of telling you it is Dinner-time.

## DIALOGUE V.

PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **Y**OU come late, *Erastus*; has any body detain'd you?

*Erastus.* Yes, *Crito*, I have been detain'd by a Visit, which I thought very long. Do you know that you were partly the Subject of the Conversation? Our Conferences begin to make a noise; People are curious to know on what our Discourses turn; they fear I shall seduce you. . . . .

*Philo.* Pray who is so charitable, as to interest himself so much, in what concerns us?

*Erastus.* It is *N*— a Relation of *Crito*, one of the gravest

graveſt Actors in the wiſe World. He began with complementing me on my pretended Wiſdom; but yet profeſſed a great fear of *Pietism*, and the pernicious Sentiments to which it may carry a Man. I aſk'd him what he meant by *Pietism*, and whether he took the Term in the good or bad Senſe. That Queſtion puzzled him: He was not willing to own he had charged me, with being a Hypocrite or falſe *Devoté*; on the other hand he was apprehenſive, I ſhould aſk him why *Piety* was dangerous, and muſt neceſſarily lead a Man to pernicious Sentiments. He knew not how to get off. It happen'd luckily that ſomebody came in, who interrupted the Diſcourſe, and reliev'd us both; for I was perhaps as much in pain as he. It does not become a young Man, like me, to puzzle ſo grave and diſtinguiſh'd a Man as N—. I am not malicious enough to divert myſelf at his expence.

*Crito*. You did not treat us ſo tenderly, *Erastus*; and I have obſerv'd you, more than once, laugh maliciously at the Confuſion you gave us.

*Erastus*. I did it without any Scruple: for beſides that the Quality of old Fellow-Collegians allows a certain Liberty, I conſider'd you as Perſons capable of making an advantage of ſuch Confuſions; and my Conjecture was well-grounded. But as to thoſe honeſt Gentlemen of N—'s Stamp, they only give them Pain without the leaſt Profit.

*Crito*. I have not yet told you, *Erastus*, that N— attack'd me the other day on your account. He had been inform'd of our frequent Interviews, and was concerned to ſee me drawn into an Intimacy with one, who has the Character of Singularity. I had like to have burſt out into laughing at the mention of Singularity; and had a mind to tell him, that way of ſpeaking was fit only for old Women and Schoolmaſters, who have a Veneration for every Syllable of their Catechiſm, as ſomewhat ſacred. But I commanded myſelf; and with good Reaſon; for he wou'd have been non-plus'd, and, as you ſay, without knowing how to make his advantage of it. I only replied, with an Air of Raillery,

that *Philo* and I should perhaps have better Success in converting *Erastus* from *Pietism* to Worldliness, than he in converting us from Worldliness to *Pietism*. He was beginning to wish Success to our Enterprize, but his Prudence made him stop short. He was sensible such a Wish was neither suitable to his Rank nor Gravity ; so that he only advis'd me to be on my guard against so dangerous a Friend.

*Philo*. Whither are you going in such haste, *Erastus*.

*Erastus*. I am leaving you as fast as possible, that I may neither seduce nor be seduced.

*Crito*. Dear *Erastus*, be not so unlucky. You must own you do not much fear us ; it wou'd be our Business to fly. I am apprehensive you have gone farther with us, than we can go with you ; but I know not what to make of you, and have reason to suspect you carry some Magical Charm about you ; for the more I propose to avoid you, the more impatient I am to meet you again.

*Erastus*. At that rate, I must be a piece of a Sorcerer ; *Crito* discovers a Quality in me, with which I was entirely unacquainted. But let us not speak too loud ; if some good Woman should over-hear us, I should soon be sentenced to the Stake.

*Crito*. Are you sure, *Erastus*, that you are not in several People's way of thinking, a more dangerous Man, than the Sorcerers who are burnt ; or, if you please, were formerly burnt ; for that Practice is now out of fashion.

*Philo*. Is it allowable, *Crito*, to proceed to Invectives without Proofs ? You will be obliged to make it appear presently, how *Erastus* can pass for so dangerous a Man.

*Crito*. I carry the Proofs within me, *Philo*. All the Sorcerers together could not have made the least of those Impressions, which the sight of *Erastus* has produced in me.

*Philo*. But are those Impressions so dangerous ?

*Crito*. Very dangerous, *Philo* ; as they tend to make a Man mistrust himself.

*Erastus*.



*Erastus.* That indeed is very dangerous; since in that situation a Man will not know whom to trust. But are you in earnest, *Pbilo*? Do you really begin to mistrust so good a Friend as *Self*? You was saying a little while ago, that you made all other Friends give place to him; but if Diffidence once creeps in there, I will not be answerable for the Consequence.

*Pbilo.* Pray, tell me, *Crito*, wou'd you mistrust a Man, of whose Honesty you are well assur'd?

*Crito.* No, certainly.

*Pbilo.* Are you dishonest, then, *Crito*, that you begin to mistrust yourself?

*Crito.* You will laugh at me, *Pbilo*, if I tell you I find I am not over-stock'd with Honesty.

*Erastus.* Take care, *Crito*, you do not give us too bad an Opinion of yourself. *Pbilo* may be scandalized at it. For my part, I shall always be pleas'd to see you endeavour to pass only for what you are. It is an Introduction to the Philosophy, of which we were talking the other day.

*Pbilo.* But tell me, *Crito*, with whom have you dealt dishonestly, and on what Occasions?

*Crito.* If I begin with acting so with myself, may I not treat others in the same manner?

*Pbilo.* I did not take you for such a Man till now.

*Crito.* Nor I myself, *Pbilo*, till I came into company with *Erastus*. Judge now, whether I had not some reason for saying he might pass for a dangerous Man, and much more so than a Sorcerer can be.

*Erastus.* I know not what I can have said to you, *Crito*, that could make you doubt of your own Honesty.

*Crito.* You have said nothing to me on that Subject, *Erastus*.

*Pbilo.* Why then do you maliciously charge him with it?

*Erastus.* Perhaps the Magic Virtue, which I use, has produced that Effect, independent of the Conversation.

*Crito.* That is the Case, *Erastus*; it is not your Arguments that have cured me of the good Opinion I entertain'd

tertained of myself. Had you attack'd me that way, I should have had an Answer ready. It is a secret Impression, a something which I cannot name, from which I would hide myself; but its Language is so true, that it is not in one's power to contradict it.

*Philo.* Has this something discover'd a want of Sincerity or Integrity within you?

*Crito.* That is what it upbraids me with every Moment; and I cannot deny the Justness of its Reproaches.

*Philo.* If it does you a good Office that way, it is unhappily to the prejudice of your Repose.

*Crito.* Most certainly, *Philo*; and it is no small mortification to me, when I imagine myself very generous, to find an Interest conceal'd under an apparent Generosity. This is only the fair side of me; were I to shew you some others, you would be very much surprized at them.

*Erastus.* *Philo* perhaps would; but I imagine I should not.

*Philo.* Why that Distinction, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* Because I have discover'd in myself a Fund or Principle of Disguise, Double-dealing, and refined Hypocrisy, which hinder my being surprized at what I may see in another. You have not forgot, *Philo*, the Picture I drew the other day of the wise World; it was my own, taken from the Original; I let you see plainly enough, that I had not learnt what the wise World is at full length, till my own Experience had taught me what it is in little.

*Philo.* I know not, *Erastus*, whether I am to take your Word for the Ill you say of yourself. I imagined your Modesty made you exaggerate in that manner, having always seen you very unlike what you call your own Picture.

*Erastus.* I shall take you at your Word, *Philo*. Is appearing to the eyes of others, very different from what one really is, being sincere or disguised?

*Philo.* Disguised, if I am not mistaken.

*Erastus.* You have seen me, you say, very unlike the Picture I give for my own. *Philo.*

*Philo.* I shall always say so.

*Erastus.* Am not I more capable than another of judging, whether that Picture resembles me or not; especially when it represents me in an ugly Likeness?

*Philo.* I grant it, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* Now I declare it is drawn to the Life; therefore, when you saw me entirely unlike it, you saw a Man in disguise.

*Philo.* You force me, *Erastus*, to subscribe to a thing which in the main I disown, and I cannot believe that . . . . .

*Erastus.* *Philo* is resolved, whatever comes of it, to judge charitably, as the Phrase is; that is, never to believe what any one may say to his Neighbour's disadvantage. But, methinks, when a Man speaks of himself, his Word may be taken.

*Crito.* *Philo* would answer, that Modesty may induce a Man to speak worse of himself than he really deserves.

*Erastus.* I have no Pretension to that Modesty, which induces a Man to speak worse of himself than he deserves, *Crito*; I willingly leave that to the wise World, which it suits better than me. I am so far from it, that I am persuaded my real Character always exceeds what I can say of myself in that way.

*Philo.* I do not see, *Erastus*, why Modesty should suit the wise World, as you have painted it.

*Erastus.* Yes, *Philo*; the Modesty, of which we are speaking, suits it perfectly well. If we take a near View of it, we shall see it at bottom no better than real Dissimulation, the Art of appearing what one is not; a Vanity much more refined than that which prompts a Man to speak well of himself; and that it proceeds only from Blindness, or a want of Acquaintance with one's self.

*Crito.* You give a pretty good Account of my Lady Modesty, *Erastus*. You may run the hazard of drawing great numbers on your back, by this Liberty: so many Authors, modest in their Prefaces; so many Ladies, excessively modest in their Compliments; so  
I many

many Candidates for Places and Employs, who know how to secure Votes by their Modesty.

*Eraſtus.* What ſay you, *Philo*? Do not all thoſe ſeveral Parts belong to the wiſe World? And had not I good reaſon for leaving it in poſſeſſion of Modesty, as an Annex to its Domain?

*Philo.* I own, that Modesty, when taken in this Senſe, entirely belongs to it. But may not Modesty be allowed its good Senſe, as well as *Pietism*, and ſuch a one as might make it ſuit good Men?

*Eraſtus.* If Modesty ought to have a good Senſe, we muſt give it ſome other Name; in that ſenſe, I know of none proper for it, but thoſe of Truth, Sincerity, and Ingenuouſneſs, in ſhewing one's Deformities, as well as Beauties. This is the Modesty that ſuits good Men. But, after all, as the World has entertain'd a quite contrary Idea of it, and as in that ſenſe it cannot ſuit good Men, they will willingly quit all Claim to it, in favour of the wiſe World, to which they alſo leave the Reputation of being modeſt, as an Appanage; contenting themſelves with the Reality, without having the Reputation of it.

*Philo.* It is eaſily conceived, that Modesty, taken in the bad Senſe, is artful Vanity, and refined Diſſimulation. But I do not ſo eaſily underſtand what you added, that both proceed from Blindneſs, or a want of being acquainted with one's ſelf.

*Eraſtus.* Pray tell me, *Philo*, how would you call a Man, who ſhould accuſe himſelf of Faults, which he thinks he has not, and deny the good Qualities which he believes he has?

*Philo.* I am of opinion he might juſtly be call'd a Liar, if things are to be diſtinguiſhed by their true Names.

*Eraſtus.* And how would you call a Man who ſhould ſpeak in that manner, with a deſign that his Neighbour ſhould think quite the contrary of what he ſays of himſelf?

*Philo.* A Hypocrite, or I am miſtaken.

*Eraſtus.* Should ſuch a Man play this part, in order

to gain the Reputation of Modesty, and thus facilitate his Promotion to some Post, or marry a Fortune, pray what Title would you give him?

*Philo.* That of a Cheat, in my opinion.

*Erastus.* Should any one undertake to shew this Man, that notwithstanding his seeming Modesty, he is at the bottom a Hypocrite, and a Cheat, how do you think he would be received?

*Crito.* Very roughly, perhaps, if our Man chanced to be . . . . .

*Philo.* Without pushing Matters too far, one may judge he would complain he was highly injured, and that he bore no Resemblance to the Picture.

*Erastus.* That would be a Proof that he knew not himself, but was absolutely blind as to the Reality of his own Dispositions.

*Philo.* That admits of no Reply.

*Erastus.* Well then, *Philo*, you will not ask me again, how a Modesty that induces a Man to speak worse of himself, than he deserves, or thinks he deserves, can be the Result of Blindness, or of a want of knowing himself.

*Philo.* I am entirely of your mind, in that Point, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* Since we are all agreed, let us walk to Town; it is very cloudy, and we may be well washed in a Quarter of an Hour.

## DIALOGUE VI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **B**Efore you came, *Erastus*, *Philo* and I were employed in wrangling.

*Philo.* *Crito* is the Aggressor to-day; he began to attack me on a Piece of Raillery of yours, as he calls it, about judging charitably. He has maintained, that your Design was to ridicule the vulgar Opinion, concerning charitable Judgments.

*Erastus.* In reality I had it a little in view. That Opinion

Opinion misleads so many, even good Men, that it were to be wished, what is true in it was distinguished from what is false.

*Crito.* I know some, who are extremely well pleased with themselves, for judging charitably of all the World, and think themselves obliged to have a good Opinion of every Man in particular.

*Erastus.* At that rate, the Case will be the same in regard to Charity as Modesty; both of them will be grounded on Falshood: a Man must be blind, in order to be charitable; and a Dissembler, in order to be modest. A fine Notion of Charity and Modesty!

*Crito.* To look at them in that Point of View, nothing appears so ridiculous: I very much doubt whether the wise World, which realizes the Idea of them so well in Practice, is able to maintain it in Speculation. Here again the foolish World has the advantage over the wise World. If it is neither really charitable nor modest, at least it makes no profession of being so: there is less Contrariety between what it practises, and what it professes.

*Philo.* There is not one Actor in the wise World, who would adopt the Idea of Charity and Modesty, established on Falshood; they would all heartily reject it.

*Erastus.* I know that, dear *Philo*, by my own Experience. Had any Man offer'd it me in that manner, when I acted a Part there, I should certainly have laughed at him. Nor is it less true, that I was not then either really charitable or modest, and that I desired however to pass for such. A Suspicion of the contrary would have touched me to the quick. What think you, *Philo*, is not this being a Hypocrite and Dissembler? You could not believe me the other day, when I threw those fine Qualities into my Picture; but attributed it to my Modesty. You will now be undeceived in that Point, and will, no doubt, take it for granted, that the Question between us is not concerning Modesty, but Sincerity and Truth.

*Philo.* I do not understand you, *Erastus*. I never  
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in my life heard a Man talk so sincerely. I have met with several, who readily accused themselves of being hasty and passionate, or lazy and indolent; but to suspect them of being void of Charity and Sincerity, would have vex'd them to the soul.

*Crito.* Might I take the liberty, I should say I suspect *Erastus* of an amicable Fraud.

*Erastus.* I beg you will explain yourself, *Crito*.

*Crito.* My Suspicion is this; that when *Erastus* pretended to draw his own Picture, he designed to draw mine, and spare me the Confusion of doing it myself. He, without doubt, observed I had a mind to begin, without having Courage enough to proceed; and that I miscarried at the first stroke, which produced only a confused Draught of apparent Generosity. If that be the Case, I am heartily obliged to him for the Favour.

*Erastus.* No, dear *Crito*; I had no Thoughts of you, when I drew my Picture. I thought Truth and Justice required that Confession from me, as a sort of Reparation of my former Disguises. Sooner or later we must come to this Resolution. Truth will lose none of its Rights; what we defraud it of in this Life, must be restored in the other, with inexpressible Confusion.

*Crito.* That is an important Truth.

*Erastus.* By a Sense of this Truth, we divest ourselves of Falshood, and the Appearances of Religion, and dare appear as imperfect as we really are, and as Truth will one day shew us to be.

*Crito.* What you said the other day, *Erastus*, is certainly true; that, in order to know thoroughly what the World is at full length, it is sufficient to know in the same manner what it is in little.

*Erastus.* I now call to mind what we were saying a few Moments since, concerning charitable Judgments; they are made to consist in judging of others, as we would have them judge of us, were we in their place.

*Philo.* Do you not think that would be just, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* Very just, without doubt. One Condition only is requisite in this Case; which is, to know whether

*Crito.* Your doubt will soon be removed, if that is he whom I see under that Tree.

*Philo.* If it is not *Eraſtus*, it is one very like him; we ſhall ſoon be ſatisfied as to that point.

*Crito.* Methinks, *Philo*, theſe Walks will loſe at leaſt three parts in four of their Beauty, when *Eraſtus* leaves us.

*Philo.* Doth he talk of going? I ſhall be extremely ſorry to part with him, though we muſt be reſign'd, ſince we cannot keep him.

*Crito.* He talks of ſetting out in leſs than a Fort-night; I hope we ſhall prevail with him to ſtay three Weeks; and even that is but a ſhort Time.

*Philo.* Now I ſee him very plainly. It is he; he riſes, and is coming towards us.

*Crito.* Dear *Eraſtus*, we muſt own ourſelves very much to blame for diſturbſing your profound Reverie.

*Eraſtus.* I may hereafter have time enough for my Reveries, but ſhall not always have the pleaſure of converſing with *Crito* and *Philo*.

*Philo.* We were talking of a Piece of ill News, *Eraſtus*; we were upon your Journey; and I could not pardon your Thoughts of leaving your Friends ſo ſoon.

*Eraſtus.* Let us not talk of that, I beſeech you, *Philo*; it is a thing not yet ready for execurion; we ſhall have an Opportunity of ſeeing one another ſeveral times before I go.

*Crito.* Perhaps, *Eraſtus*, you deſign to give us the ſlip, when we leaſt think of it; but we ſhall prevent that by having a watchful Eye over you.

*Eraſtus.* Do you know I have another Journey to take before I leave you for good and all?

*Crito.* I gueſs that Journey is to the Country Seat of N . . . your Relation. Though it were but for a few days, *Eraſtus*, it would be ſo much time ſtolen from us.

*Eraſtus.* He would have made me promiſe to ſpend eight Days with him, but I engaged only for four. Beſides, I believe N . . . would not oppoſe me, if I ſhould



should invite you thither during my Stay at his House.

*Philo.* Nor shall we oppose the Motion, *Erastus*; the Bargain is made, though I am not so particularly acquainted with *N . . .* as *Crito* is.

*Crito.* You will not guess, *Erastus*, what Question I was ask'd yesterday about you. I was in company with *Fortunatus*, a young Gentleman, to whom I communicated your Definition of the wise World and the foolish World. He immediately declared himself a Member of the latter, and in that did himself justice. While we were thus employed, *Permnas* came in, and desired to know the Subject of our Discourse. We told him: he was struck dumb; but could not step into the Class that was proper for him, as *Fortunatus* had done. The rest of the Company, however, placed him there; one half quarter of an Hour's Conversation with him was sufficient for concluding him an Actor in the wise World. He took some notice of it, and was uneasy. Being thus embarrass'd, he took it in his head to ask me to what World you belong'd, since you would not range your self in either Class. I told him I had not yet required you to explain your self on that Subject. No doubt, says he, *Erastus* places himself in the devout or pious World. Not so neither, said I; and then gave him the good and bad Sense of those Terms. To what World can he belong then? asked my Gentleman, with some warmth. Perhaps, replied I, smiling, he is a Man of the other World. In fine, to put an end to the Dispute, I promised I would get an Answer to his Question from your own Mouth.

*Erastus.* The Title of a Man of the other World is too good for one, who, like me, is still much attached to this.

*Crito.* To what World shall I say you belong then, dear *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* I am a Man lately escaped from the wise World, and who endeavours to keep at a distance from it, in order to make my way to the sincere World.

*Philo.* How, *Erastus*! have you not long been in the Class of sincere Men?

ther the Person to be judged would consent to be known to the bottom, and that another should judge of him only by what he is; or whether, on the contrary, he desires to be judged favourably, to the prejudice of Truth.

*Crito.* Here I must do myself Justice. Till this time, had I been to make the Choice, I should certainly have chosen the latter. I do not know, *Erastus*, whether you have me always in view or not. But you describe me very well in the Character last mentioned.

*Erastus.* Without having you in view, *Crito*, I may often hit on your Character, by reason of the Conformity of my own Experience with yours.

*Philo.* *Crito* has interrupted us, *Erastus*. Let us know what you drive at.

*Erastus.* I say, that if the Maxim of judging others as we would be judged, is just and equitable, it ought to be observed by such as are just and equitable. What say you to that, *Philo*?

*Philo.* I think that, as you say, in order to judge equitably, a Man should be equitable himself.

*Erastus.* Do you think a Man of Equity, if he was blind, for example, would require others to judge he has fine Eyes?

*Philo.* That would be a pleasant Fancy indeed.

*Erastus.* But how many, who are blind in regard to Religion and themselves, would pass for clear-sighted Persons!

*Crito.* There is no need of going farther than me, to find one of this kind.

*Erastus.* The advantage you have over them, *Crito*, is, that you know yourself in that point.

*Philo.* *Crito* will tire out my Patience with his Practice of interrupting. I would fain hear *Erastus's* Conclusions.

*Erastus.* The Conclusion is, that in order to set things in a clearer light, we ought to speak, not of judging charitably, but of judging equitably. Not that in reality Charity can be contrary to Equity; but it is so in the vulgar Opinion, which requires a Man to blind himself, in order to judge charitably. *Philo,*

*Philo.* That Distinction, I confess, is proper for solving the Difficulty.

*Erastus.* If I am a Man of Equity, for example, I would have others judge of me only by what I am, or by what they may know of me. For the same Reason, I will judge of others only by what they are, or by what I evidently know of them.

*Philo.* That is equitable.

*Erastus.* In all doubtful Particulars or Circumstances, I will judge only by Probabilities or Possibilities, and suspend my Judgment, without giving myself the trouble of justifying or condemning.

*Philo.* This would be acting judiciously, and keeping out of the danger of being deceived.

*Crito.* To know how to suspend one's Judgment is an admirable Secret; but I think nothing so difficult.

*Erastus.* The Philosophers pretend to be Masters of it; I know not whether they really are or not.

*Crito.* I believe, that in that, as in other things, they know but little of themselves. I can speak by Experience.

*Philo.* Is it not too rash to judge of others by one's self, *Crito*?

*Crito.* I except such as have taken Philosophy by the right End, and enter'd on it with the Practice of that Admonition, *Know thyself*. Do I wrong those who have not enter'd in this manner, when I say they know not themselves? This is just as if a Man should find fault with me, for saying the *Africans* are not white.

*Erastus.* Methinks the Sun shines hot enough here to make us *Africans*. I am for seeking some shady Place; and believe we shall be better accommodated in the House, than any where else.

## DIALOGUE VII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Philo.* **W**E are here very early. I doubt *Erastus* is not come before us.

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*Crito,*

*Eraſtus.* That is what I aim at, dear *Pbilo*; and that is the Tendency of all the Lessons I receive from the Maſter, whom we ſpoke of. But I muſt tell you, he gives me Ideas of Sincerity very different from thoſe I once entertain'd of it. I ſhould have imagined my ſelf a Phenix in point of Sincerity, had I always ſpoken exactly what I thought, without Diminution or Exaggeration. This would have been a conſiderable Point gained; but entire Sincerity goes much farther. It is not confined to acting ſincerely with one's Neighbour; its chief Tendency is to make us deal ſo with our ſelves.

*Pbilo.* How much were it to be wiſhed we could meet with great Numbers truly ſincere in the firſt reſpect! Are not you too hard to pleaſe, *Eraſtus*, in not being ſatisfied with that, but aſpiring at ſomething more? For my part, I confeſs ingenuouſly, I have no clear Idea of what you call dealing ſincerely with one's ſelf.

*Crito.* I own, *Pbilo*, I do conceive ſome Idea of it; but it is from my Experience of the contrary. I catch my ſelf every Moment; and it is what I the other day call'd not acting honeſtly with one's ſelf.

*Eraſtus.* Nothing is more hard to define than Sincerity with one's ſelf; it muſt be learnt by Experience. It is ſo nice a Point, that without a very tender Conſcience, it is impoſſible to explain it. Conſcience becomes tender in proportion as it is obey'd. The more we liſten to it, the more diſtinctly it ſpeaks. It is invariably on the ſide of Truth, and diſcovers a Falſhood in us, of which we ſhould never have thought ourſelves capable; but all this is not done without our full Conſent.

*Crito.* I perceive I do not deal ſincerely with my ſelf, for example, when I have a glimpſe of ſome Truth, that condemns me, and would carry me farther than I am willing to go; I very well know how to turn my Eyes from it, and ſet my Mind at eaſe by Arguments that juſtify my Conduct.

*Eraſtus.* Have you but lately diſcovered in yourſelf an Aversion to Truth, *Crito*?

*Crito.*

*Crito.* Not till your Arrival, *Erastus.*

*Erastus.* Was you in a more happy Situation in that respect before?

*Crito.* I cannot tell, *Erastus.* But the truth is, I did not discover in my self any Falshood, or Opposition to Truth. I did not even imagine I resisted it; and should any one have charged me with so doing, he would have touched me to the quick. Now I want no Accuser in that Particular but myself.

*Erastus.* I should think, *Crito*, that your Experience of resisting Truth, is a Proof that it makes some Progress in you.

*Crito.* How can that be, *Erastus*? Doth not such a resistance oppose the progress Truth might make? I do not understand you, unless you explain yourself better.

*Erastus.* It is true, did Truth meet with no Opposition in the Heart, it wou'd make a much quicker Progress. I spoke thus by way of Comparison with your former Disposition; and my Meaning was, that when you perceived no resistance within you in regard to Truth, it was Proof that you was not vigorously attack'd by it; and that you had, perhaps, placed so many Barriers between it and yourself, that it could be heard only at a great distance.

*Crito.* Now I comprehend you, *Erastus.* You let me see that those, who imagine they make no resistance to Truth, are at the greatest distance from it, or directly turn their backs on it.

*Philo.* It must be own'd that Conscience is but little known in the World, though every one pretends to have one.

*Crito.* Nothing is so much talk'd of. A Man without Conscience, or who should pass for such, wou'd be detested by all Mankind, whatever other Qualifications he might be supposed possess'd of.

*Erastus.* I am persuaded every Man has a Conscience; but ask each Man in particular, of what service it is to him, and what use he makes of it, and he will be puzzled for an Answer. Is not the Reply we

find in one of *Æsop's* Fables, applicable on this Occasion? He is speaking of a Man, who hid a Treasure in the Earth, without making any other Use of it; upon which, another says to him, put a Stone in its room, it will be full as valuable to you.

*Crito.* Among what we call honest Men, there are several, who, wou'd they but speak the Truth, might say they make no more use of their Conscience, than if they had none.

*Eraslus.* In that point, they religiously observe *St. Paul's* Advice concerning Riches, and all Things of this World.

*Philo.* But yet are there not several, whose Conscience prevents their falling into great Disorders?

*Eraslus.* There are indeed great Numbers, who forbear giving into gross Disorders; but it is a question, whether that Effect is always produc'd by Conscience. Self-Love is a very persuasive Casuist; especially when it has to do with honest Men, it has good Reasons to offer them, with which they are easily satisfied. It shews them the damage they wou'd do themselves in the World, the Contempt into which they wou'd fall, if they indulged themselves in such Excesses, as are fit only for the Dogs of the People. These are weighty Reasons, to which they are oblig'd to yield. Besides, this good Casuist is complaisant: he permits his Devotees to make themselves amends for the Pleasures, which he prohibits, with others incomparably more refined and engaging.

*Crito.* I find there is not much difference between Self-Love's Devotees, and the Actors of the wise World. May it not be said, that among such People, Conscience has fewer Voices in the Chapter, than it has among the Actors of the foolish World.

*Eraslus.* You have hit the Nail on the head, *Crito*; and it is no hard matter to guess the Reason. Self-Love, which governs them both, is in the wise World a grave and rational Casuist, that persuades with weighty Reasons; whereas in the foolish World, it is an extravagant, passionate and unreserved Counsellor; who  
may

may make what noise he pleases to hinder Conscience from being heard, the least of its Motions is always consider'd as a Testimony of Truth; if it is not follow'd or obey'd, it is at least feared and respected; Men have no Reasons to offer against it. The Counsellor in question is not so well provided this way. In the wise World the Case is different. If Conscience attempts to speak, as its Language is very simple and concise, and its Decisions are most commonly given as quick as Lightning, it has soon finish'd what it has to say. Then it steps the Casuist, with a croud of demonstrative Reasons against what Conscience has pronounced; while it leaves him in sole possession of the Argument, and lets him talk as long as he pleases. Thence it is concluded, that it owns itself conquer'd, and that it is a fine thing to have to do with able and skilful People.

*Crito.* Dear *Eraslus*, you have given a description of what has passed within me ten thousand times.

*Philo.* I find *Crito* becomes more learned every day, in the Philosophy we were lately talking of; we shall soon be able to call him a Man escaped from the wise World. It is plain he is in no good humour with it, and falls on it at every turn.

*Crito.* You will inspire me with Emulation, *Philo*; I would fain prove your Words true. I am sensible, however, that there is a wide difference between knowing the wise World for what it is, and really making one's escape from it.

*Eraslus.* You will always be more and more sensible of that, *Crito*. But do we not forget ourselves? I believe it is time to retire; and I fear I have already made a Friend wait, with whom I am to dine.

*Crito.* Shall we not see you again, *Eraslus*, before you go into the Country.

*Eraslus.* I believe not, *Crito*, for I must go to-morrow morning. But I depend on seeing you in the Country, and expect you will keep your Word.

## LETTER I.

*From CRITO to ERASTUS.*

**I**T is not my fault, dear *Erastus*, that I have not been so good as my Word. I design'd to have seen you yesterday with *Philo*; but was detain'd in Town by some unlucky Accidents, which it wou'd be tiresome to relate. I wou'd have engaged him to go alone; but he chose rather to stay for me.

To console ourselves under this delay, we walk'd towards the Evening in our usual Place of Rendezvous. I will not let you know how melancholy it appear'd without you. I had better tell you we stood in great need of such a Friend as *Erastus*, to set us right. We fell into a Dispute, which was occasion'd by the Subject of our last Conversation.

The Question turn'd on the Language of Conscience, and the manner in which you told us it expresses itself, in Flashes as quick as Lightening. *Philo* wou'd not allow this Language to be always that of Truth. He maintain'd that the Decisions of Conscience ought to be examin'd and corrected by Reasoning. He grounded what he said on that universally receiv'd Maxim, *That every Man is obliged to enlighten his Conscience.* To which he added, the Difficulties usually started on this Article; that Pagans, Mahometans, and superstitious Christians, believe they obey their Conscience in the false Worship they give the Deity: That even the most merciless Persecutors pretend their Conscience justifies them in their Cruelties: In short, that we see good Men, and Persons of Sense at the same time, giving into all sorts of Puerilities, and becoming Fanatics, when they blindly give themselves up to all they imagine Conscience requires at their hands.

It wou'd be tedious to tell you what Reply I made: thus much is certain, I did not acquit myself well of the Task, and *Philo* went away delighted with his Advantage over me. I threaten'd him that he should  
not



not come off so well another time ; that I wou'd send you an Account of our Dispute, and engage you to answer for me. He seem'd to consent readily to the Proposal : I am now as good as my Word ; he is in my Room while I am writing ; and I shall let him see my Letter, that he may judge, whether my Charge against him is just or not. He may look as big as he pleases ; but I am assur'd he already repents of giving his Consent. I shall spare myself the trouble of concluding with an *I am*, &c. and you that of reading it. I desire you will do the same, and believe it will be not less to your mind than to mine.

## LETTER I.

*From ERASTUS in the Country to CRITO.*

**D**O you think it fair, dear *Crito*, to engage one's Friends without their Consent ? At your rate of talking, one wou'd imagine me a Divine, and oblig'd to answer all Objections that can be brought against a particular System.

By your leave, I do not take that to be my Case ; for, besides that I am no Divine, I do not positively embrace any System, so as to set up for defending it. You will tell me, perhaps, that I adopt the System of Conscience ; I do indeed adopt it, if it may be allow'd that Title. But there is a great deal of difference between relishing a Truth one's self, and engaging to maintain it against all possible Attacks.

*Philo* may remember that when he ask'd me, in one of our first Conversations, for a Definition of Conscience, I answer'd him, that I had not skill enough for that ; that I left the task for the Divines ; and that for my part, I could say nothing of it, but what I had learnt by Experience.

The Objections drawn up in your Letter against the way of Conscience are not new to me. I myself for a long time form'd a terrible Notion of the Rocks on which that way might cast me ; at present I cannot  
suffici-

sufficiently admire the Contradiction I observe in the Language of the generality of Mankind; especially in the Class of the wise World, where Men profess to set a great Value on Conscience, to have a supreme Contempt for a Man who has none, or wilfully acts against its Dictates; and wou'd consider him as a Person void of Honesty and Sincerity. Who cou'd depend on him in any thing? By this Idea, of which every one makes profession, Men pay Homage to Conscience, attribute to it what is most excellent and valuable among Mankind, and own that without it, nothing wou'd be valuable or excellent.

On the other hand, the worst of Vices are ascribed to it, such as Idolatry, Superstition, Fanaticism, and the Spirit of Persecution. Thus it is soon degraded from its former Rank; on this foot it must be upright and false at the same time; the Source of the greatest Good, and the Source of the greatest Evil; in a word, sweet and bitter Waters must flow from the same Spring.

I heartily wish, my dear Friend *Crito*, and those, whose Cause he pleads, wou'd teach me how to reconcile two things so directly opposite. In the mean time, I shall decline writing on a Subject which seems to me too serious for the Country, at least if it must be handled gravely, as *Philo* and *Crito* propose.

You see, my dear Friend, you are mistaken in the Choice of your Man for setting you right. Beside that I am but a poor Writer, the Country invites me rather to think than write. You expect, perhaps, that I should communicate my Reveries to you, and tell you how I pass my time here; but not a word of that, except you come and share the Pleasure with me. Besides, to tell you the truth, I should think half an hour ill employ'd in giving you the Particulars. A Company of little Musicians perch'd on the top of the Trees, have waited for me this quarter of an hour; they love to sing in the Cool of the Day, we hear but little of them when the Sun shines hot.

hot. Judge now, dear *Crito*, if I can stay in the House, and spend one Moment in writing.

## LETTER II.

*From CRITO to ERASTUS.*

I Perceive, dear *Erastus*, that I must surmount all imaginable Difficulties to come to you; without that, the Quarrel between *Philo* and me, cannot be ended. You design'd to mortify me by not sending a direct Answer to *Philo*'s Objections, as I took upon me to promise you wou'd. My Disappointment has prov'd no small comfort to him. He expected to be soundly paid off: the bare shortness of your Letter reviv'd him, before he knew the Contents of it. I observed, however, that he was gravell'd at two or three Passages.

He made a point of Honour of adopting all that can be offer'd in favour of Conscience, and knew not how to reconcile it with what he had advanc'd to its disadvantage. In short, he was forc'd to own he had made such Objections, with a view of speaking the Language of several People, and giving you an Opportunity of answering it, rather than with design of expressing his own Ideas. I perceived that, if there was some Truth in what he said; it was at the same time a sort of Evasion. I let him know as much, which was not very agreeable to him. You see then, dear *Erastus*, that our difference will still subsist, 'till you reconcile us. In fine, we are resolv'd to see you Tomorrow, and perhaps early enough in the Morning to hear your little Musicians. It is to be hoped that Harmony will have some Effect on our Minds, and in some measure dispose us to sing the same Tune.

LET-

## LETTER II.

*From ERASTUS to CRITO.*

**I** Was not a little vex'd, when I wak'd this Morning, and heard it rain violently. Did not you sympathize with me, dear *Crito*? I was willing to flatter myself for above an hour that the Rain wou'd give over, and that I might yet enjoy the Company of my Friends. But it has begun again, and I must lose all hopes for to-day at least; for I depend on its allowing us some Quarter to-morrow, and hope I shall see you here very early. In the mean while, I must be resign'd to be a Prisoner all day; which is no small Mortification to me. I should make but a bad Figure in the Country, were I obliged to keep my Room; and in that Particular, I must confess I am a poor Philosopher.

I have been reading over your two Letters. The Diversions of the Place, and the Objects with which it presents me, had made me forget the Subject of the first. That is not the Case at present. The Turns I have taken in my Chamber, are so far from defacing *Philo's* Objections about Conscience out of my Mind, that they present them fresher to my Memory; and I have been so importun'd by them, that I have taken up my Pen, to write what occurs to me, and clear my hands of the Subject, if I can.

The Difficulties in question, at first appear'd to me very considerable, and much more so on the Receipt of your Letter. I know not but the Cloudiness of the Weather, has help'd to diffuse some Obscurity on my Ideas; but I see Things very confusedly, and what the other day seem'd very easily demolished, appear'd to me like a Mountain to-day.

I really thought that such as had committed the greatest Errors in point of Religion, make use of the pretext of Conscience, and value themselves on obeying its Motions. What is Conscience then? said I, within myself.

self. Doth it stand in need of being enlighten'd and corrected, as *Philos* supposes, according to the universally received Maxim?

By what Rule must it be corrected? To do this, we must find a Rule infallibly right, and incapable of varying; if we are not provided with such a Rule, we must still have recourse to another more right and invariable for correcting this; and so on *ad infinitum*, till we meet with the infallible Rule, or the Rule of Rules, by which all is to be corrected.

Where then shall we find this invariable Rule? Shall it be Reasoning, as so many maintain? But is there any necessity of proving that nothing in the World is so variable as Reasoning? Why must one way of Reasoning be rectified by another, that by a third, and so on *ad infinitum*, without our ever coming to one, that will not admit of Correction? Why, among a thousand Persons who understand Reasoning, do we not find four who entirely agree?

Every one charges his Antagonist's Reasoning with falsity; if Reasoning ought to serve for the Rule, there must be, in this multitude of opposite Reasonings, an Infinity of false Rules, which do not deserve that Appellation, because a Rule is a Rule only as it is one and right.

Where then is this invariable Rule? said I to myself. Is it Conscience? But is not that accus'd of being subject to still more Variations than Reasoning? Do not the different Sects or Religions, in which every Man thinks he has Conscience on his side, give us room to judge that it doth not every where speak the same Language?

Here now are Variations on all sides. Is there no certainty for Man, and must he necessarily fall into Falshood, even while he is obeying his Conscience? At that rate, no Man wou'd be culpable, or have any occasion to reproach himself with a Crime. Disobedience to Conscience wou'd be a thing indifferent, as it wou'd not be a safer Guide than Reasoning. If Conscience is not better qualified for commanding Respect than Reasoning, if the former has no Superiority over the latter, of what use will it be? Shall it be its Business to

go hand in hand with Reasoning, and command with equal Authority? Here is a Conflict of Jurisdiction; if the Orders of one are contrary to those of the other, and their Authority equal, which must be obey'd, and who shall judge?

But, by way of expedient, Conscience shall have the Pre-eminence, and speak first. Reasoning will then step in to examine and rectify her Decisions; that is, Conscience will have the Pre-eminence in Name, and Reasoning in Reality. Conscience will be in the condition of a Prince during his Minority, who bears the Title of Sovereignty, while in what regards the Government of the State, he is consider'd as a Cypher, and all the Subjects know the Regent governs, and not the Prince. What will be the Consequence of this? Reasoning will not only be above Conscience, but will rule alone, because no Order given by Conscience can pass, without being examined and corrected by Reason.

Thus Conscience becomes useless in the World, since Men have found out the Art of assigning it a Governour. It must have relapsed into a State of Infancy, and given Proofs of Weakness, before Men can go this length. But have they a full right to consider it always, as weak both in themselves and others? In this last respect, there are a hundred Cases in which they wou'd be very much displeased it should pass for such. Is any Affair of Interest in question, where they find themselves injured, the Governour, or Reasoning, may take what pains he pleases to make the contrary appear; he will still be liable to exception: Men will appeal to the definitive Judgment of Conscience, without allowing the Governour any Redress. They are willing Conscience should judge alone in him who injures another; and are convinced that if he listens to it, he will be condemn'd without being able to gain a second Hearing.

Why do we guess so exactly what will be the Decisions of Conscience in another? Why do we appeal to that of an Enemy, how unjust soever he may be, with an absolute Assurance that it will condemn him

if he listens to it? Were the Conscience of a Person who acts thus in his own power, were he Master of it, as he is of Reasoning, would it give Judgment against him? Wou'd he not oblige it to speak as he pleased?

In this respect, Conscience ceases to be weak in the Judgment of all Mankind. They not only set it above Reasoning, but are desirous that all Men should consult it alone in regard to their way of acting with them, particularly where Interest is concern'd. Here they grow dissident of the most specious Reasonings; and charge them with being false and deceitful. They declare that they appeal to every Man's own Conscience; and are ready to submit to its Judgment.

This is a Proof that Men respect Conscience in general, though they set no value on it in particular. They are sensible what advantage they can make of that of others; but sit down contented with not knowing to what purpose they have one of their own. On the other hand, every one will do his best to make an advantage of his Neighbour's Conscience in what suits his own Conveniency. This is the way to hinder it from being entirely useless; this is a stroke of Art.

But do we not find this same Art miscarry in regard to ourselves? Are there not certain Times and Circumstances, in which Conscience exerts its Authority over Reasoning, and obliges it to be silent? Danger of Shipwreck, for example, or the View of approaching Death, are sufficient to convince us that the Testimony of Conscience cannot be reform'd by Reason, how refined soever it may be supposed; and that it dares not attempt to disprove Conscience in what it pronounces, when awaken'd by the approach of Eternity.

It must be own'd that Conscience plays very different Parts among Men. Sometimes it stands in need of Reformation; at others, it acts the Reformer. It always speaks Truth in others, when it condemns them for an Injury done us; but may mistake in us; when it pronounces some Accusation against us, it must be rectified by Reasoning. Here now are very contrary Parts.

But

But is it, properly speaking, Conscience that plays them, and not rather Men who play them in what regards Conscience? Is not Light invariably the same, though it produces contrary Effects, as the Eye is well or ill disposed?

If the Eye happens to be afflicted with a Cataract, do Men say Light must be cleared, that the Eye may see? Is it not immediately thought, the Eye must be rectified, as containing all the Obstacles to the Refraction of Light?

These, dear *Crito*, are part of the loose *Reveries*, which the reading of your Letters, and a Walk in my Chamber, have produced. If they afford you any Entertainment, you must thank the Rain, and my Mortification at being confin'd while in the Country; I should not otherwise have been able to come to a Resolution of committing them to writing. I could say a great deal more on the Subject; but shall take care not to send you my Thoughts. You must come yourself, if you desire to have my *Reveries* more at large. An excellent Inducement for Friends to take a Walk!

Our dear Friend *Philo* will see in the mean time what weight ought to be allowed that Maxim, which he says is universally received, *That Conscience stands in need of being enlightened*, and that its Decisions ought to be examined and corrected by Reasoning.

Good-night, my dear Friend. As the Weather begins to clear up, I hope I shall be a good Astronomer, and that it will be fair to-morrow. I wish I may have as good Skill in Astrology, when I foretel that I shall see you here. It will be your fault if I do not pass for such, and receive the addition of that Title to the Character of Magician, which you have already bestowed on me.



### LETTER III.

*From CRITO to ERASTUS.*

**Y**OU shall not yet set up for an Astrologer, dear *Eraſtus*, ſince it has not been in our power to ſee you to-day, though our Inclination was good. As for the Character of Magician, *Philo* ſays there is no diſputing it with you, ſince your Letter of yeſterday. He maintains, there muſt be ſome Magic in your way of thinking; otherwiſe you could never have overthrowed the univerſally received Maxim as you do. With this Perſuaſion he endeavours to conſole himſelf under his being worſted, as I had told him he muſt expect. However, he ſtill pretends to look big on your not having gone through with the Difficulties he had propoſed to you. But I foreſee he will be intirely routed. If nothing but a rainy Day was neceſſary for giving me that Pleaſure, (without offence) I could wiſh for it with all my heart. I am too much obliged to the Weather yeſterday, not to prefer my own Satisfaction in that Point to yours. You ſee, *Eraſtus*, that Diſinter ſtedneſs gains ground in me. If that is not my Caſe, you will, at leaſt, be ſomewhat pleaſed with me for appearing ſuch as I am, according to your favourite Maxim.

### LETTER III.

*From ERASTUS to CRITO.*

**I** Perceive, dear *Crito*, you are endeavouring to put me in a paſſion in good earneſt. You are loading me with Affronts, by being worſe than your Word, and wiſhing me a hearty Rain, and that in ſuch manner, that it may fall opportunely. You muſt be a good Astrologer yourſelf, ſince your Wiſhes prove ſo many Predictions; and I am thus reduced to the Neceſſity of writing againſt my Will, in order to clear my hands of what I had farther to ſay concerning my

*Reveries.* Judge now if less Provocation than this would not be sufficient to wear out my Patience. But I will not give a Loose to Passion at present, I reserve myself for our next Meeting; you would come off too easily in a Letter.

In order to proceed to the Sequel of my *Reveries*, it might be necessary to repeat the Substance of what I said in my last. The following, if I mistake not, is the Conclusion to be drawn from it;

That since all Men acknowledge Conscience inviolable, in the Cases which we have specified; since they respect it in others as a divine Testimony, when it no ways clashes with their Passions, and mistrust it either in themselves, or others only, when it attacks them in those Passions, or their Prejudices, it must be really inviolable in its self; and the Variations ascribed to it, proceed not from it, but from some foreign Cause, with which it has no Connection. This is explain'd by the Comparison of Light, which is in itself inviolable, though different in its Effects on the Subjects exposed to it.

If we must give a good Sense to the universally received Maxim, instead of saying, *Conscience ought to be enlighten'd*, it should be said, *That we ought to allow Conscience to enlighten us, by endeavouring the Removal of all Obstacles in its way.*

In this sense, Conscience would no longer be charged with the Contrarieties, which appear in the different Sects that fill the World; since those very Contrarieties are the Result of the Obstacles which each Man forms within himself, to the simple Lights of Conscience, and the Impressions of Truth.

Here a new Objection may be started: if Conscience is in all Men a divine Testimony, it is endowed with the Infallibility attributed to the Church, &c. If it is infallible, those who listen to it, and obey it, must become so too. We do not see this to be the Case. Persons the most docil in following what their Conscience requires of them, are not secure from Error; we even find among them such Contrarieties and Difference of Sentiments,

Sentiments, as seem to be so many Proofs, that their Guide is neither infallible, nor invariably the same.

This Difficulty is the same, in the main, with that which relates to the Multitude of Sects, and the Contrarieties subsisting among them. Conscience is not concerned here; on the contrary, Confusion has been successfully introduced into the World, because Conscience has not been sufficiently received and obeyed.

As to Persons who are docile in following what they believe Conscience requires of them, they are not indeed secure from Error, or Mistakes in point of Opinion, or speculative Ideas; because Conscience doth not begin to work in Man on Ideas or Opinions. As sound Ideas cannot make him essentially good, erroneous Ideas cannot render him essentially bad. What then is the first and chief Office of Conscience? To labour to make Man upright in relation to Truth and himself; from which Uprightness toward his Neighbour necessarily results.

In order to bring him to this Uprightness, Conscience begins with shewing him the *False* within him, not in Ideas, but in the Will. The Influence of the Will over Man, is of a very different Nature from that of Ideas. The Will alone is sufficient for leading him to every thing most divine, when it is upright; as well as to what ever is most diabolical, when it is void of Uprightness. When Conscience labours to rectify the Will, rather than Ideas, it doth not thereby leave Man a Prey to Error and Seduction; on the contrary, it, by this means, conducts him into the Path of Truth.

In proportion as the Will becomes upright, it enters into an *Equilibrium*, which divests the Mind of the Prejudices that obscured it, and were so many Obstacles to the Impressions of Truth. This *Equilibrium* is not acquired in a few days; it is formed imperceptibly, in proportion to the Progress of the Will in Uprightness; and the Will becomes upright only in as much as it performs all that Conscience may require of it,

Obedience to Conscience, therefore, is the true Key of Knowledge, it is the Introduction to all Truth. If this Key is in every Man's hand, why doth it let so few into the Path of Truth? It is because they either know not how to use it, or will not use it. They would be displeased at being shewn too much that way; and thus they want the first Degree of Uprightness: for if they would give Entrance to Truth, they ought not to endeavour to avoid it.

I believe, dear *Crito*, I have said enough to clear Conscience of the false Accusations urged against it; but know not how you will justify your ill Usage of me. I will ask you to come no more; I am too angry with you. Besides, I fear, that on your Arrival here, all my Fury would vanish, and I should appear perfectly good-humour'd.

## DIALOGUE VIII.

*CRITO and PHILO, meeting ERASTUS in the Country.*

*Crito.* SHALL we repose ourselves in this charming Walk, *Philo*? *Erastus* may come hither accidentally; his Surprise would divert me.

*Philo.* We have been worse than our Word so often, that it is extremely probable he has given over all Hopes of seeing us.

*Crito.* I should have been very sorry, if we had been able to come sooner, *Philo.* He would not have prevailed with himself to write down what he calls his *Reveries*, which would have proved a great loss to us. I know not whether you was as sensible as I, of the Force of his two last Letters.

*Philo.* I was so sensible of it, *Crito*, that methinks till that time I never had any Idea of the Reality of Religion, Conscience, and Uprightness. What *Erastus* said on those Points in our Walks, had made but very little Impression on me: his Letters were necessary for opening my Eyes, and letting me see how little

rightness I had. The last particularly has affected me very strongly, and convinced me, that I was deficient in the essential Point, and was as yet a Stranger to the first Degree of Uprightness, because I shut my Eyes against the Truth.

*Crito.* You do not imagine, *Philo*, that I am going to congratulate you on the Progress you are likely to make in the School of *Eraclus's* Master.

*Philo.* I very well deserve to be banter'd in my turn, dear *Crito*, after having rallied you so often on that Topic. I put on an Air of Pleasantry; but at the bottom was really very jealous. I was not a little vexed, when I saw you hit the Mark on several Occasions, while I shot wide.

*Crito.* I hear somebody stir in that Arbor; perhaps it is *Eraclus*, who is gone to repose himself there, that he may meditate at his ease.

*Philo.* Let us walk that way, without making a noise, that he may not see us. I hear somebody sing; what if it should be he? Do you hear what he is singing, *Crito*?

*Crito.* Hush, let me listen. . . . . Would you know the Words? they are these:

*As the bright Ruler of the Day  
The smallest Atoms makes appear;  
So Truth, with one enlight'ning Ray,  
Discovers what we truly are.*

*Philo.* That's for me; one would imagine he knows we are here.

*Crito.* He knows nothing of the matter, *Philo*, as you shall see by his Surprise. Let us steal into the Arbor.

*Crito.* Give us that Song once more, *Eraclus*; we should be glad to learn it.

*Eraclus.* Is this your way of surprizing Folks, Gentlemen? You have not allowed me time enough to put on my angry Face; it is now too late to attempt it; and I must appear in a good Humour to you, in spite of my teeth.

*Philo.* But seriously, *Eraclus*, did you not know we

were near you? I thought you had chosen this Song for me.

*Eraſtus.* I know ſo little of the matter, *Philo*, that I had left all Hopes of ſeeing you in the Country. I was preparing to go and quarrel with you in Town, where I propoſe being to-morrow. But, to my Song; pray in what Particular do you find it ſuits you?

*Philo.* It ſuits me as much, *Eraſtus*, as the Contents of your two Letters, or, if you pleaſe, the *Reveries* you have communicated to us.

*Crito.* Did you know, *Eraſtus*, what an Impreſſion your *Reveries* have made in *Philo's* Mind, you would not have been ſo angry with me for engaging you to put them in writing.

*Eraſtus.* Are you in jeſt or in earneſt, when you talk to me at this rate?

*Crito.* I am very ſerious, *Eraſtus*; *Philo* can tell you how it is, better than I. All I can gueſs, from what he has ſaid to me on that Subject, is, that your two laſt Letters have made him open his Eyes to what he before fear'd ſeeing.

*Eraſtus.* I did not expect that *Reveries* could have done ſo much.

*Philo.* They've done enough for explaining what you had ſaid in our Walks concerning Conſcience, and what I neither would nor could underſtand. I was juſt telling *Crito*, that I was not a little vex'd to ſee him hit the Mark, while I ſhot wide, and perceived what I did not, but that I had a mind to enter into a Diſpoſition like his, but I was ſorry he was in ſuch an one, not caring he ſhould have that advantage over me. Have you not obſerved, *Eraſtus*, that my firſt Congratulations on the Progreſs he made, were a ſort of Compoſition of ſweet and ſour? I made uſe of them ſucceſsfully for Diverſion; when Truth became troubleſome to me, I immediately found ſome Hlaſtron for guarding me againſt it; eſpecially when the Queſtion turned on being upright and ſincere with one's ſelf, I could not bear that Article. When *Crito* accused himſelf of want of Honesty, he gave me all the Mortification

tion imaginable. I felt, in spite of myself, that the Shoe pinch'd me there. To get rid of this Trouble, I defended him charitably; and you ought to think me very civil in that particular.

*Eraſtus.* Dear *Philo*, I gueſſed well enough what was the Principle of that civil Humour. One who has been acquainted with the wiſe World, is very capable of diſcovering its Practices in another.

*Philo.* Now you mention the wiſe World, do you know I was cruelly mortified every time it was brought on the Stage; and the more ſo, as I endeavour'd to put a good face on the matter, that you might not perceive how I was affected. I found my Character too well drawn in it, not to know myſelf there: but I would not ſee myſelf, much leſs own myſelf of that Claſs. *Crito* gave me much Uneaſineſs, when he acknowledged he belonged to it with ſo much Ingenuouſneſs; that Frankneſs was as inſupportable to me, as it would have been agreeable, had it not reproached me.

*Crito.* You know how to compoſe yourſelf, *Philo*; and no one who ſaw you would have ſuppoſed you ſuffered ſo much.

*Eraſtus.* I could have judged very exactly of the Matter; and a certain Air of Perplexity ſpoke more to me, than an Air of Vexation and Anger.

*Philo.* I envied you both that Freedom and Eaſe which I obſerved in you; I diſſembled the beſt I could, that I might ſeem on the Level with you; but it was all to no purpoſe. I was always under ſome Reſtraint; the moſt I could do, was to run away; and when I perceived how the Caſe ſtood with me, I found freſh Matter for Jealouſy, which I took great care to conceal. I found Employment enough, when I undertook not to appear what I was, and to appear what I was not. Are you to be ſurprized, that I could not ſeem free and eaſy, while I had ſo ſerious an Affair on my hands?

*Eraſtus.* The wiſe World, which pretends to ape all that is beautiful and lovely, makes a Man counterfeit a ſort of Eaſe and Freedom, and even Ingenuouſneſs,

though they are the contrary of its Character. But there is no less difference between that counterfeit Ease, and the true one, than between Brass Counters and Louis-d'ors.

*Philo.* I conceive, that if Men could but once resolve to see themselves, and let others see them such as they really are, Freedom, Ease, and Ingenuoufness, would be the natural Result of such a Disposition. It would be a fine thing to see the Heart thus laid open; but then, on the other hand, would it not be a most frightful Sight?

*Crito.* I leave you to judge, *Philo*, what a Scene it would be to view Men devoted to Interest, Envy, and Ambition, entirely puffed up with themselves; not to mention grosser Vices, which rather belong to the foolish World.

*Philo.* Is it not better Men should continue masked as they are, than play such odious and deformed Parts in the World?

*Eraslus.* The Mask which Men wear, is what occasions the greatest Deformity. By the help of that, they not only conceal what they really are from others, but even hide themselves from themselves. The Use of it renders their Distemper incurable, so long as they remain Strangers to themselves. Could Men resolve to shew themselves such as they are, how deformed soever they might be, the Evil, being discovered, would soon be removed. They would have too much Confusion both before themselves and others, to neglect the Means of a Cure. Conscience, not being stifled in them by Hypocrisy and Disguise, would be a Clue to lead them out of this Labyrinth.

*Crito.* I imagine, *Eraslus*, that Sincerity in shewing one's self such as one is, would be one Step toward Uprightness, which would allow Truth to make itself heard, and thus free Man from the Evil.

*Eraslus.* Right, *Crito*. The least degree of Uprightness would be sufficient for making Men conquer the most corrupt Inclinations, as they would not endeavour to conceal them from themselves,

*Philo.*



*Philo.* What you observed in your last Letter, *Erasmus*, concerning that first Degree of Uprightness, proved a Thunder clap to me. I was convinced I had not that first Degree; since I could not bear the Impressions of Truth, when it aim'd at curing me of my Esteem for myself. I felt what Conscience was, and that in a manner till then unknown to me. What you said of it in your Letters, made me feel something of it; but I have found that the least Experience teaches us more on that head, than all the Definition that can be given of it.

*Crito.* Do you remember, *Philo*, that in one of our former Conversations, you asked *Erasmus* for a Definition of Conscience?

*Philo.* I chofe rather to hear his Definition of it, than to be referred to my own. *Erasmus* mortified me, when he refused my Request.

*Erasmus.* Several People find this Convenience in Definitions of Conscience, that they make use of them for rendering themselves still deaf to what might be offered. Conscience is of so nice a nature, and so much superior to Reasoning, that it escapes from all Definitions. Those who delight in trifling, will always find room enough to do it on this head. They fight with their own Shadow; while Conscience would secretly reproach them with want of Uprightness, if they would but listen to it one Moment. But they are glad to seek it where it is not, that they may, with more Security, avoid being in a Condition of hearing it.

*Crito.* Do you not see somebody, *Erasmus*, who hastens toward us?

*Erasmus.* He comes to call us to Dinner; let us not make the Company wait. We will take another Walk in the Afternoon. I will carry you into a little Grove, where we shall have more Shade than here.

## DIALOGUE IX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **H**AVE you not taken a little Nap since Dinner,  
*Philo?*

*Philo.* If I have not slept, I have had several *Reveries*. I know not whether this Humour be peculiar to *N's* Country House, or whether I have caught it of *Erastus*; but I find it very agreeable. The Shade of these Chestnut-Trees seems to contribute to it; and I should have continued in it at least two Hours, had not you come and fetched me out of it.

*Crito.* We have teaz'd *Erastus* so much, to make him communicate his *Reveries* to us, that he will have a good Right to make the like Demand on you.

*Philo.* My *Reveries* are of but little Concern to *Erastus*; they are only the Impressions his have made on me.

*Erastus.* Do you imagine, *Philo*, that *Reveries* which are either the Sequel or Effect of mine, are of but little Concern to me? I cannot be indifferent to the Good or Evil that results to you from them: if the latter, I shall be very sorry; if the former, I shall be very glad, not only on a Principle of Friendship, but also on that of Self-love, which is delighted with having contributed to the advantage of one's Friends.

*Philo.* I believe, dear *Erastus*, that Self-love has not now much Influence over you.

*Erastus.* If you entertain that Notion, *Philo*, I ought to undeceive you. I pretend to be no more than one escaped from the wise World; and how widely distant is such a State from that of a Man on whom Self-love has no Influence? I confess I have only a Glimpse of it at a great distance. I would fain find a more significative Expression, than that of a Man who has escaped from the wise World; it is too extensive in a strict Sense. If it is true in any Sense, it is only because I have left off acting a Part in it, because I see it such as  
it

it really is, and do all in my power to keep at a distance from it. But if the same Expression might be made to mean that I am still belonging both to the wise and foolish World, by Habits hard to be rooted out, by Inclinations opposite to what is good, and Passion still very strong, it would then describe me perfectly well. You are surprized, *Philo*, at the Picture I draw of myself; it is not less to the life than what I presented you with the other day, in quality of an Actor in the wise World. All the Difference between the two Pieces is, that in one the Man is disguised, studies how to cheat the whole World, deceive himself, appear what he is not, and not appear what he really is; in the other, he endeavours to impose on no Man, but is willing to see the deformed Part of himself, and let others see him in the same Light.

*Philo*. I was just going to tell you, *Erasmus*, that Modesty had a great share in the Account you give of your present Disposition. But I stopt short, apprehending you would reprimand me, as you once did on the same Occasion. I am sensible likewise, that this way of speaking would have been an Effect of Self-love in me; while I considered you as much more advanced than myself, I should not have been willing to perceive I had still a long Journey to make.

*Erasmus*. What advantage I may have over you, dear *Philo*, is very inconsiderable. The Uprightness of the Will, into which you seem to enter in good earnest, will soon put us on the Level. Though the Road be long, that ought to give us no trouble; if we begin with the Steps before us, we shall proceed in our Journey; and it is not necessary we should yet see the end of it.

Another essential Difference between the Pictures in question, is, that in one the Man has made choice of a fixt Point, where he is willing to stop: he is very well satisfied with himself, and the Part he is acting; in the other, he stops no where, he still goes on where Conscience directs him, and is never satisfied with himself well enough to stay where he is.

*Philo*.

*Philo.* You draw me very well, *Erastus*, in the first of those Pieces. I have hitherto been very well satisfied with myself, and the Part I acted in the World. I saw no Addition that could be made to my Wisdom; and should have been very angry, had any one attempted to remove me from the fixt Point, where I was resolved to stop. Your Stay here, and the Discourse we have had in our Walks, have frequently given me a secret Uneasiness in that Particular. If I have shut my Eyes against the Truth, it is because I fear'd it would lead me farther than I was inclined to go. I every where find a want of Uprightness; that only stopt me. However, I made Profession of valuing Uprightness beyond all that could be said.

*Crito.* Uprightness is a Principle so simple and incontestable, that all the World pretends to espouse its Cause. Uprightness in our Dealings with our Neighbour is constantly esteemed. Self-love is concern'd in it; we should be very well pleased that every one would deal uprightly with us; and for the same reason, we value ourselves on dealing so with others: but are absolutely ignorant from what Fund this Uprightness should proceed, in order to be real. Uprightness, in regard to Truth, and to ourselves, is entirely unknown; and because we want that, we are contented with knowing no more of it.

*Erastus.* It is impossible for a **Man** to be truly upright toward his Neighbour, unless he is first so toward Truth and himself. There is no Command for loving our Neighbour better than ourselves. As to Truth, as it alone can enable us to distinguish what is right from what is not; how shall we listen to it when it speaks for our Neighbour, if we have not given it the Hearing when it spoke for ourselves; that is, when it reproved us for the wrong done to ourselves?

*Philo.* I know some Men who will admit of all you have said concerning Uprightness toward Truth, on condition you did not by the word *Truth* understand the Language of Conscience. That Term *Conscience* has something in it that gives them Pain.

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* I conceive the Reason of that, *Philo*; it is because the word *Conscience* sends them back too far into themselves; whereas that of *Truth*, being less determinate, leaves them in a Persuasion, that the Truths in question are such as may be found without themselves, and learnt by Reasoning. Such Persons hold Conscience to be weak, as I said in one of my Letters. I would fain ask them, whether they have a Conscience or not? They, in their turn, might ask me, for what sort of People I take them, when I make that a Matter of doubt? If you have one, I should say, Is it upright or false? True or a Lyar? They would readily reply, that it is true and upright. If so, I should ask them again, why they would not own the Language of Conscience, and that of Truth, to be one and the same thing?

*Philo.* Let them get out of that Scrape if they can.

*Crito.* In order to give them the finishing Stroke, one need only shew them what *Erastus* says in one of his Letters, or *Reveries*, concerning the invariable Rule by which every thing is to be corrected and regulated, and which itself admits of no Correction.

*Philo.* One of the Passages, which I think most proper for opening the Eyes of reasonable Men, is the Question which *Erastus* asks concerning the Use or Design of Conscience; whether it ought to be placed above or below Reasoning, or walk hand in hand with it, as its Equal. The Comparison of a Prince in his Minority, and a Regent, which follows that Question, serves to set Truth in a strong Light in that respect.

*Erastus.* Do you think, *Philo*, that good Reasoners could not get out of all those Difficulties? They would find Evasions enow; I am in no manner of pain for them. I observed to you this Morning, that such as delight in trilling, are under but little Apprehension from the justest Definitions, which can be given of Conscience. By accustoming themselves to dispute about the Definition, they put themselves still less in a Condition of hearing the Decisions of their own Conscience. Thus they gain their End; which is all they desire.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* From your saying this Morning that Conscience is above the reach of all Definitions, I imagine it bears some resemblance to Light. All the Definitions which can be given of Light, can never help us to any Idea of it. Define it to a blind Man, he will be never the wiser. Define it to a Peasant, who has good Eyes, you'll make no addition to the Idea or Opinion he has of it.

*Philo.* This comes to what *Erastus* says in one of his Letters. The Obstacles to Light are in Man himself; it is on Man we must go to work, if we wou'd remove the Obstacles which hinder Truth from reaching him.

*Crito.* These Obstacles must certainly be very considerable in all Men, since so few give entrance to Truth. Almost all Men are Slaves to Error, Superstition, and the most extravagant Opinions. The small Number capable of knowing Truth (I mean, the Christians) are attached to their Passions, blinded by their Prejudices, and a Presumption of their being perfectly clear-sighted. It is impossible to say on which side the Obstacles are most hard to be removed, or how it may be effected. It is to no purpose for me to say to myself, that Uprightness of Will, and Obedience to Conscience are sufficient for that end; this seems false from Experience, in regard to great numbers of Pagans, who have appear'd Men of Integrity; and yet Conscience has not disengag'd them from Error.

*Philo.* We may make the same Observation in regard to several Christians, who seem to have a very tender Conscience, and yet it does not cure them of Superstition.

*Erastus.* What you say, *Crito*, includes two Questions; First, What are the Obstacles most difficult to be remov'd? Secondly, Whether it be possible that Uprightness of Will, and Obedience to Conscience should be sufficient to effect it.

Let us, if you please, distinguish two sorts of Obstacles; one voluntary, the other involuntary. I now speak of all Men in general, both Christians and Pagans.

I lay then that Uprightness of Will and Obedience to Conscience, are perfectly sufficient for removing voluntary Obstacles; and that such as are involuntary may be more or less surmounted by the same Means, as certain Circumstances are less or more favourable.

*Philo.* Were I not a little stupid, I should understand you at half a word, without any further Explication. But I must do myself Justice in this point, and beg you wou'd illustrate what you say by some Examples.

*Erastus.* Let us first consider what involuntary Obstacles are. They are what we neither cou'd prevent nor hinder; such as Men have rais'd in us, without our Consent, and before it was in our power to guard against them. Of this sort are false Notions in Points of Religion, the extravagant and superstitious Opinions, which are forged in the heads of young People, before they have time to give their Consent to them.

Of this sort likewise, are the bad Examples of vicious Persons, join'd to their pernicious Maxims which insinuate themselves into young Hearts, before they can suspect the tendency of them. This last kind of Obstacles, which are at first involuntary, may afterwards become voluntary.

*Philo.* I now very well understand in what involuntary Obstacles consist. You see, *Erastus*, I have some Penetration; but I am afraid you will soon have another Notion of me in that respect, if I ask you in what voluntary Obstacles consist.

*Crito.* I imagine myself sufficiently able to answer that Question, *Philo.* They are such as depend on the Will.

*Philo.* None but a Philosopher, like *Crito*, could have demonstrated that nothing more resembles what is white than Whiteness.

*Erastus.* It must be own'd, that voluntary Obstacles are more easily understood than defined, unless we wou'd be content with *Crito's* Definition. A ridiculous as it is, we shall not fail to make some advantage of it; and that by considering what are the Obstacles which depend on the Will.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* You see, *Philo*, that *Eraſtus* ſets ſome value on what you deſpiſe ſo much.

*Eraſtus.* One of the firſt things that depends on the Will, is to liſten to Remorſe of Conſcience, or to ſtiſſe it. If the Will takes the firſt way, it thereby begins to be upright, which is an Introduction to all Good. If the laſt, it enters into the *False*, which is the beginning of all Evil.

When the Will has once enter'd into the firſt Degree of Uprightneſs, it depends on that Faculty to advance in the ſame Path, and to be call'd from the firſt to the ſecond, from the ſecond to the third, and ſo on, as long as it does not go out of the way. This is not hard to conceive. Can it be doubted that it is in the power of my Will to avoid all voluntary Evil, and in that point perform what my Conſcience requires of me. Now Conſcience requires nothing impoſſible; it never reproaches us with what we are not able to avoid. Suppoſing then that I honeſtly give myſelf up to its Direction, either to renounce all it may forbid me, or to perform all it may require of me; are not voluntary Obſtacles thus remov'd? And is it not incontestable, as I have advanc'd, that Uprightneſs of Will and Obedience to Conſcience are abundantly ſufficient for removing all voluntary Obſtacles.

*Philo.* What you ſay, *Eraſtus*, is evident in regard to Practice. If my Conſcience never requires what is impoſſible, it is certainly in my power to obey it. But in regard to ſpeculative Truths (I mean, the moſt important) does Conſcience lead us as directly to them? And is it ſufficient for removing the Obſtacles which oppoſe them?

*Eraſtus.* In order to answer this laſt Queſtion, we muſt uſe ſeveral *Diſtinguiſh's*. We muſt firſt know what you call *important Truths*; and whether the Obſtacles which oppoſe their Reception, are voluntary or involuntary.

*Philo.* By important Truths, I underſtand thoſe reveal'd to us in the Goſpel, concerning the coming of JESUS CHRIST, his Life, Death, Reſurrection, with others



others of the same nature. It is evident that an Infinity of Men have not been conducted to these Truths by Conscience; of this sort are the great multitude of Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans; not to mention the Numbers of those who disfigure the Gospel by erroneous Tenets, which they pretend to have found in it. As to the Obstacles which oppose the establishment of Truth, among those different People, I have not sufficiently enquired in what Class they are to be ranged, so as to speak decisively on that point.

*Eraslus.* Do you remember, *Philo*, that about half an hour ago, you told me you very well understood the Nature of involuntary Obstacles, from the detail I gave you of them?

*Philo.* I do remember it, *Eraslus*.

*Eraslus.* Do you not find then that the different People, of whom you spoke just now, are surrounded by involuntary Obstacles, such as I describ'd: that they are beset with them before they can suspect them, and consequently guard against them? Let us take a *Jew*, for example, before he can well speak, he is inspir'd on one hand with an extreme horror of *Christians*; on the other, with a blind Obedience for all his Parents teach him concerning Religion. The Case is the same with the *Turks*; and what is still more surprizing, *Christians* themselves are not in a better Situation on account of the different Parties or Religions, which they profess. Such of them, particularly, as pretend to have Infalibility among them, are surrounded by Obstacles, not only involuntary, but almost insuperable in regard to the Knowledge of certain Truths.

*Philo.* I am very sensible, *Eraslus*, that all those different Ranks of Men cannot be blameable for the Obstacles among which they are born, and which are thrown in their way without their Consent.

*Eraslus.* Pray tell me, *Philo*; does Conscience reproach Men with things for which they are not to be blamed, and which did not depend on them?

*Philo.* A pretty Question! That wou'd be unjust.

*Erastus.* This is the reason, why Conscience in a *Jew* or *Mahometan*, doth not reproach him for being a Jew or a Mahometan, nor for the Exercises of Religion, which he practises as such. Let us say the same of a sincere Christian, who should from his Infancy imbibe the Prejudices of the infallible Sect. Conscience makes him no reproach on that score, nor for the superstitious Practices which may result from it. With much more reason may the Application be made to a Pagan; in a word, to all the People whom we call Idolaters, and who have been least in the way of knowing the Truth.

*Crito.* This solves the Objection I started concerning the Insufficiency of Uprightness of Will, among several very worthy Pagans, for disengaging them from Errors.

*Philo.* Here you must give me an Explanation of what you advanc'd e'en now, in regard to which I told you I was a little dull of Apprehension. We were talking of voluntary and involuntary Obstacles. Having asserted that Uprightness of Will and Obedience to Conscience, were sufficient for surmounting voluntary Obstacles, you added that, by the same means, a Man might more or less surmount involuntary ones, as some certain Circumstances were more or less favourable. I very well understand the first Article; but beg you wou'd explain the second.

*Erastus.* Let us suppose a *Jew*, for example, whose Will is upright, and who pays a faithful Obedience to his Conscience in practical things; this Docility will insensibly carry him on to a better Acquaintance with himself. If he knows himself, he will begin to be diffident of himself, and perceive he is capable of Prejudices and Obstinacy, in regard to Religion. As soon as he comes to see himself in this Point of View, he will be on his guard against all that may offer itself from that quarter against Christianity. He will then resolve to enter into an impartial Disposition in regard to Truth, and receive it from what quarter soever it comes; and even doubt not that it may not be found in Christianity. Thence he will go so far as to take a resolution of embracing

bracing that Religion, supposing Truth is found in it, whatever it may cost him. Thus far we see that this *Yew*, Uprightness of Will, and Obedience to Conscience, have remov'd voluntary Obstacles, and made way for Truth. He is thereby plac'd in that *Equilibrium*, which disposes the Soul to receive all the Impressions of it. Now tell me, *Philo*, do you think a Man very far from the Truth, when he has proceeded thus far, tho' he is unacquainted with the particular Circumstances, reveal'd to us in the Gospel, relating to the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ? And supposing this *Yew* dies in so upright a Disposition, before it is in his power to get such a thorough Information of the Truth, as is sufficient for embracing Christianity; do you think, I say, that his Fate wou'd on that account only be more miserable at his Death?

*Philo*. I am far from being of that Opinion. He cannot be culpable of what did not depend on him. But, supposing the same *Yew* should live several Years after he had enter'd into this Disposition, wou'd he not be infallibly led by his Uprightness to embrace Christianity?

*Erytus*. Not infallibly; that wou'd depend on the Circumstances, more or less favourable, in which he might be. This is what I was just now saying, and what you found some difficulty to conceive. I will therefore explain it to you. To this end, instead of one *Yew* we must suppose two, in an equal disposition of Uprightness in regard to Truth.

*Philo*. I heartily wish, dear *Erytus*, I could suppose the time wou'd permit us to hear the sequel of your Discourse, without danger of being shut out of Town; but I think it is high time to retire, and that we have not a Moment to lose.

*Crito*. You did well in reminding us, *Philo*; for I believe, I should have run that hazard, rather than interrupt either of you.

*Philo*. I leave you to judge, *Crito*, what I have lost by it. I imagine myself like a School-Boy, who leaves half his Breakfast at home, for want of time to finish it.

it. I hope *Erastus* will feel some Remorse, that will oblige him to send me the remainder of mine.

*Erastus*. I rather chuse to bring it you, dear *Philo*; for I must be in Town to-morrow.

## DIALOGUE X.

### *In TOWN.*

*PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.*

*Crito*, to **T**HIS is being a Man of your word.

*Erastus*. I Had *Erastus* been revengeful, he might have been even with us, by putting us off from day to day.

*Erastus*. I should have been the first Sufferer, *Philo*; how much soever I like the Country, I had no Inclination to spend the few days there, which I have for seeing my Friends.

*Crito*. Cannot those few days be prolonged in their favour?

*Erastus*. It shall not be my fault, *Crito*, if they are not. But I beg we may not talk on that Subject, I have nothing of the *Stick* in me; I may allow the Thought to affect me in a manner that will spoil our Walk.

*Philo*. To avoid that, *Erastus*, I must ask you what you have done with our *Jews*, or rather with the two *Jews*, whom you was bringing on the Stage?

*Erastus*. If you please, *Philo*, they shall join us in our Walk; I am going to pull them out of my Pocket, where I put them last Night.

[*Erastus takes a Paper out of his Pocket, which he delivers to Philo, who reads it to himself.*]

*Crito*. How hardly you deal with those poor *Jews*, *Erastus*, by confining them in so close a Prison!

*Erastus*. After you left me, I observ'd they follow'd me wherever I went; and became so troublesome, that I was oblig'd to have recourse to this expedient for my own ease.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* It were to be wished a Man could get rid of all troublesome Persons with as little difficulty. But few of them are in the humour of being pocketed thus.

*Philo.* I could very easily be in the humour of charging you with being troublesome, *Crito*. You hinder me from understanding one Word of what I am reading.

*Crito.* It is partly to punish you, *Philo*, for keeping all to yourself; had you begun to read aloud, no-body wou'd have interrupted you.

*Philo.* I cannot read aloud as I walk, *Crito*; let us sit down, and I will do the Office of a friendly Reader.

*Crito.* That Expedient will reconcile our difference. I offer myself as your Assistant, as soon as you are tired.

*Philo.* There will not be Employment enough for two; I am going to begin.

“ How to find out more easily, how the *Uprightness*  
“ of the Will, and Obedience to Conscience, may  
“ lead more or less to the clear and distinct Knowledge  
“ of certain Truths.

“ I have said, we must suppose two *Jews*, instead of  
“ one, and both in the same degree of Uprightness  
“ and Fidelity in obeying their Consciences; here then  
“ you see them, so far as the Will is concern'd, in  
“ a perfect *Equilibrium*, in regard to Truth. If they  
“ have any Obstacles still remaining, which oppose its  
“ Impressions, the Will has no share in them; those  
“ Obstacles come from a more remote quarter, as we  
“ have already observ'd; they were form'd in them  
“ before it was in their power to mistrust them.

“ Let us now see how different Circumstances may  
“ concur towards putting two Persons so equal, as to  
“ the main of their Dispositions, in a different Point  
“ of View, in regard to Opinions.

“ First then, we are to place our two *Jews* in different Countries, though both in a condition of knowing the Christians, and hearing them talk of Religion.

“ gion. To distinguish them the better, I shall call one  
 “ *Jeph.* the other *Benjamin*; they shall both be sup-  
 “ posed willing to doubt, whether they are in posses-  
 “ sion of Truth, or not; so that here we see each of  
 “ them employ’d in seeking Christians capable of giv-  
 “ ing them Information.

“ *Jeph.* lives in a Country (*Holland*) where Chri-  
 “ stians are divided into several Sects, such as Roman  
 “ Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, Greeks, Ana-  
 “ baptists. He is in a condition of enquiring into the  
 “ Truth of each, and determining where Truth is?

“ *Benjamin* is not in a condition of making the same  
 “ Enquiry. In the Country where he lives, (*Avignon*)  
 “ only a few Sects of Christians are allow’d. His Situation  
 “ appears to be less advantageous than that of *Jeph.*  
 “ *Benjamin* has thoroughly examin’d the Doctrine and  
 “ Conduct of such Christians, he has more dislike to  
 “ them than ever; and concludes that, if the Chri-  
 “ stians, whom he knows not, are no better, they are  
 “ not in possession of the Truth. However, he  
 “ suspends his Judgment, and proposes to travel for a  
 “ thorough Information.

“ Let us return to *Jeph.* Without leaving his own  
 “ Country, he takes a view of the different Sects of  
 “ Christians, applying himself to the Doctors of each  
 “ successively.

“ He finds Men more eager in extolling the Excel-  
 “ lency of their own particular Sect over the rest, than  
 “ in showing the superiour Excellency of Christianity  
 “ in general. What gives him most perplexity is, that  
 “ each Sect pretends to be the Depositary of pure  
 “ Truth, exclusive of all the rest.

“ He finds among the Doctors of each Sect a Spirit  
 “ of Partiality, private and passionate against all other  
 “ Parties. Those of the infallible Sect, in particular,  
 “ shock and discourage him in proportion to the At-  
 “ tempts they make for gaining him.

“ From the Ecclesiasticks, he goes to the Laity;  
 “ where he finds the Mind possessed with the same Pre-  
 “ judices; a Set of Men, among whom Religion is  
 “ placed

“ placed only in Memory, or outward Show, to which  
“ they give the Name of Worship; among whom  
“ Conscience is known only by Name; or the Advan-  
“ tage they are able to make of that of other Men;  
“ People, who, in short, idolize themselves, are their  
“ own Center, and their own End.

“ Here now our poor *Joseph* is still more and more  
“ embarrassed. His Fund of Uprightness helps him to  
“ discover in the nominal Christians, a *False*, which  
“ makes him like them the less, the better he knows  
“ them.

“ However, he is not yet quite discouraged; he  
“ is reduced to a Supposition that the Religion of Chri-  
“ stians is different from their Practice; all that puzzles  
“ him is the Division and Opposition of Parties. From  
“ the Laity he goes back to the Doctors; and pro-  
“ poses an expedient for informing himself thoroughly  
“ of the Truth; which is to let him see how they agree  
“ in the Essentials of Religion, and give him a view of  
“ that in a simple and precise manner, without requi-  
“ ring him to take the Name of one Sect or Party ra-  
“ ther than another, or perplexing himself with parti-  
“ cular Opinions.

“ The Proposal appears reasonable. A Day is fix’d  
“ for discussing the Question. The Doctors of each  
“ Sect chuse such of their Number as they esteem fur-  
“ nished with the best Abilities; and thus form a sort  
“ of Synod. The *Jew* doth not insist on being ad-  
“ mitted into it; he is content to wait the Result of  
“ their Deliberation. Let us now see how they pro-  
“ ceed.

“ At first great Civilities and much Politeness are used  
“ among the Doctors; they mutually promise to make  
“ some Concessions on all sides for the common Inter-  
“ est of Christianity: the Question here is not concern-  
“ ing the Conversion of one single *Jew*, but of great  
“ Numbers, who may be influenced by his Example;  
“ this is a sufficient Motive for engaging them to exert  
“ themselves in a particular manner.

“ They begin with discussing the fundamental Points,  
 “ or the Articles of the Creed, on which they easily  
 “ agree; as they do likewise in admitting the Scrip-  
 “ ture to be the Word of GOD.

“ Thus far they are of a mind. One of the Com-  
 “ pany proposes to stop here, and present the *Jew*  
 “ with the Christian Religion in a plain, and at the  
 “ same time extensive manner, without embarrassing  
 “ him with the particular Senses, which each Party  
 “ pretends to find in the sacred Writings.

“ The Proposal is unanimously hissed; according to  
 “ them, the thing is impracticable, and subject to a  
 “ thousand Inconveniencies. After all, what sort of a  
 “ Christian wou’d a Man be, who is not first instruc-  
 “ ted by the Doctors in the true Sense of the Scripture,  
 “ who rests satisfied with being a Christian in ge-  
 “ neral, without declaring for any particular Reli-  
 “ gion? A Christian like this wou’d be a Man with-  
 “ out Religion; and we all know how pernicious a  
 “ thing it is to profess an Indifference to particular Re-  
 “ ligions, not to say Sects. Hence it is unanimously  
 “ concluded, that if the *Jew* embraces Christianity,  
 “ he must at the same time declare for some particular  
 “ Religion, must take one Side or another; in a  
 “ word, he must have a Religion.

“ Here they are once more all of a mind. There  
 “ remains now but one Point to be cleared up or deci-  
 “ ded, *viz.* which is the true Religion, which the  
 “ best adapted for securing Salvation; in short, which  
 “ is most agreeable to the Gospel, and the Doctrine  
 “ of the Apostles.

“ This is the difficult Point; the more they strive  
 “ to clear it up, the more perplex’d it appears. Af-  
 “ ter five or six hours employ’d in the Discussion of  
 “ this single Question, every one is just where he be-  
 “ gun; each pretends that his own Religion is the only  
 “ one exempt from Error, and teaches the Evangelical  
 “ Truth in all its Purity.

“ *Joseph* by this time grows impatient to know the  
 “ Conclusion of the Doctors: He is introduced into the

“ Assem-



“ Assembly: is told what has passed: that the whole  
“ Company are perfectly agreed on all Points, except  
“ the last, which relates to his Choice of a Party.  
“ Upon this, the Moderators or Deans of each Party,  
“ one after another, entertain *Joseph* with an Apolo-  
“ gy for their respective Sects: Each of them main-  
“ tains that his alone can justly claim the Title of Re-  
“ ligion: that all the rest are no better than so many  
“ Sects, where the Truth is falsified, and disguised so  
“ as not to be known.

“ Discourses so opposite one to the other strike *Jo-*  
“ *seph* quite dumb: He is silent for some time: He  
“ recollects what he has read in the *Mosaic* History  
“ concerning the Tower of *Babel*, and the Confusion  
“ of Tongues. This silence gives each of the Doctors  
“ hopes that he will declare for his Sect; and each  
“ grows impatient to hear the *Jew* pronounce in  
“ his favour. At last *Joseph* comes to a Resolu-  
“ tion: He cuts the *Gordian* Knot, by declaring that  
“ the Confusion of Tongues must cease among them,  
“ particularly among the Guides, before he becomes a  
“ Christian: *That Truth being one, cannot be unlike itself:*  
“ That, if the Christians are really the People of God,  
“ there is reason to expect that, sooner or later, he will  
“ raise up Guides, who will not oppose one another:  
“ That the Conduct of God in regard to the antient  
“ *Israelites* is a Proof of this: That, as soon as he sees  
“ the way made plain, and the Guides united walk  
“ first in it, he will willingly follow them; since no-  
“ thing keeps him at a distance from Christianity, but  
“ the Division he sees amongst Christians.

“ *Joseph* upon this retires, without waiting for any  
“ farther Reply; and not meeting with Christians of  
“ a different make from these, during the Course of  
“ his whole Life, he retains the Name of a *Jew*; and  
“ under an Appearance so despicable in the Eyes of  
“ nominal Christians, conceals the Interior of a true  
“ Christian, or the Disposition which is the essential  
“ Part of it.”

*Erastus.* Are you not tired, *Philo*? The Article of *Joseph* is somewhat long.

*Crito.* Let me read that of *Benjamin*. I am impatient to know what Part he is to act; that of *Joseph* has been very agreeable to me in its kind.

*Philo.* It gives one a glimpse, in several parts, of more than it expresses. Here is matter for several *Reveries*. Was I to follow my own Inclinations, I should reserve the Article of *Benjamin* for to-morrow.

*Crito.* I have not so much Patience as you, *Philo*; I am too desirous of seeing the Sequel, to come to that Resolution. Give me the Paper; I'll read it to myself, if you had rather indulge your *Reveries* than hear.

*Philo.* Read aloud, *Crito*; I shall find an Opportunity for that another time.

*Crito* reads.

“ We left *Benjamin* big with a Design of travelling,  
“ in order to make himself acquainted with the several  
“ Sects of Christians. He sets out, and visits several  
“ Cities, Academies and Universities.

“ His first Observation in general is, that all Christians,  
“ of what Sect soever, are exactly of the same  
“ mind in one Point. That Point is a Love of Riches,  
“ an insatiable desire of adding to their Fortunes. In  
“ that respect, they are more *Jews* than the *Jews*  
“ themselves. *Benjamin* cannot enough wonder at seeing  
“ Men, who acknowledge JESUS of Nazareth, the Son of a poor  
“ Carpenter, for their King,  
“ do all in their power for raising themselves to Dignities,  
“ for enriching themselves; in fine, for being the  
“ direct contrary of what he was in this World.

“ He finds the same Spirit generally diffused through  
“ the Ecclesiasticks of all Sects. In this respect, they  
“ seem not less the reverse of the Fishermen or Apostles,  
“ than the Cross of Christians are of Jesus.

“ He asks himself how Men, so uniform in the main,  
“ whose Inclinations are so exactly the same, should  
“ be divided, and wrangle about Opinions; the Difference  
“ of which lies, or is considerable, only in the

“ Ima-

“ Imagination? He is tempted to tell them, they are  
“ better agreed than they imagine; that, instead of  
“ being divided into several Sects or Religions, they  
“ are all of the same.

“ What is remarkable is, that they are so at the  
“ bottom of their Hearts; they perform not the Acts  
“ of it out of Grimace, or perfunctorily. This Reli-  
“ gion has an universal Influence over all their Opi-  
“ nions, and over their whole Conduct, even when  
“ they do not think of it. Without reflecting on it,  
“ they accomplish its Precepts.

“ *Benjamin*, conceiving this Idea of the Power which  
“ Religion must have over the whole Man, can find  
“ among the Christians but one Religion, which is the  
“ same that reigns equally over all corrupt Persons,  
“ whether Pagans, Jews, or Mahometans; and which  
“ at the bottom is nothing but an idolatrous Self-love,  
“ divided into as many Branches as Men have Passions  
“ and various Inclinations.

“ *Benjamin* looked not for such a Religion among  
“ Christians; he enquired for Christianity; could he  
“ acquire for it elsewhere? What is Christianity then,  
“ says he within himself? Whither must I go to find  
“ it? In the Gospel, and in the Memory of Chri-  
“ stians?

“ Thereupon he proposes to hear their most cele-  
“ brated Doctors; he applies successively to several,  
“ and of different Sects. Each of them gives so beau-  
“ tiful an Idea of Christianity, that *Benjamin* tells  
“ them, at that rate there are no Christians in the  
“ World. One of them owns, there is but too much  
“ Truth in the Observation. To whom do you preach  
“ then? says the *Jew*. To Christians in appearance,  
“ replies the Doctor; but, generally speaking, to real  
“ Pagans.

“ Hence *Benjamin* concludes it better for him to re-  
“ main a *Jew*, with Uprightness, and the Fear of  
“ God, than enter into a Society, where every one  
“ knows how to disguise himself, so as to appear what  
“ he is not, and not appear what he is.

“ He

“ He now resolves to return into his own Country:  
 “ he has no farther Enquiry to make among the Chri-  
 “ stians; he has conversed with their different Sects,  
 “ heard their most celebrated Doctors, and found no  
 “ Uprightness or Simplicity among them. This is  
 “ sufficient for discouraging him.

“ He sets out; and in an Inn meets with a Com-  
 “ pany of Christians, who attack him on Religion.  
 “ One of them is silent; *Benjamin* looks attentively at  
 “ him, and finds something in his Countenance that  
 “ strikes him. He disengages himself from the rest, and  
 “ accosts him. He asks him whether he is not a Chri-  
 “ stian, and why he does not undertake to convert him,  
 “ as the others had done. ‘Tis, replies he, because I  
 “ am thinking to become a Christian myself. Was  
 “ you not born a Christian then, says *Benjamin*? I  
 “ was indeed born of Parents called Christians, replies  
 “ the same Person, (to whom we shall give the Name  
 “ of *Sincerus*) but that alone does not make a Man a  
 “ Christian; much more is required. *Benjamin* sur-  
 “ prized at this Answer, in order to engage him to  
 “ explain himself, asks him of what Religion or Sect  
 “ he is. *Sincerus* replies, that he aspires only at be-  
 “ coming a true Christian, without giving himself the  
 “ trouble of engaging in any Sect; that those Divi-  
 “ sions and Oppositions shew they are Sects, not Re-  
 “ ligions; because Religion is one, and cannot be di-  
 “ vided.

“ *Benjamin*, still more astonished at finding a Chri-  
 “ stian of this Make, asks him, whether it is possible  
 “ for a Jew to become a Christian, without taking the  
 “ Name of some Sect, and declaring for it against all  
 “ others? To which *Sincerus* replies, that if it was pos-  
 “ sible to be a Christian in former Times, before the  
 “ Introduction of Sects, it is possible to be one now,  
 “ without engaging in any: that we are not to judge  
 “ of Christianity by the Dresses with which each Sect  
 “ disguises itself: that it is in itself very simple, and  
 “ consequently independent of the particular Opinions  
 “ to which Men pretend to confine it: that Christi-  
 “ anity

“ anity is, in substance, no more than the Religion of  
“ *Abraham* and *David*, renewed by *Jesus* : a Religion,  
“ whose Bases are Uprightness and Obedience to Con-  
“ science ; all the Precepts of which are reduced to the  
“ Creature’s being sincerely devoted to the Creator ; a  
“ Disposition which includes all the Sacrifices that the  
“ true Children of *Abraham* may have been obliged to  
“ offer, to show the Strength of their Faith, and the  
“ Sincerity of their Love.

“ *Benjamin*, whose Uprightness has already prepa-  
“ red the Way for all Truths that may be propoted to  
“ him, feels the whole Force of this. He assures *Sin-*  
“ *cerus*, that the Veil is removed from his Eyes ; and  
“ that, if he had seen Christianity in this Light sooner,  
“ he should have been a Christian long before.

“ They afterwards discourse more at large on the  
“ Life of *Jesus*, his Instructions, his Sufferings, and  
“ the Design of his Death. I shall not relate what was  
“ said on those Subjects. I only add, that *Benjamin*,  
“ by the Uprightness of his Will, having already the  
“ Disposition essential to a true Christian, finds no  
“ difficulty in becoming such in all respects, and, pur-  
“ suant to the same Disposition, exposing himself to  
“ all the Persecutions which the false *Jews* may raise  
“ against him.

“ By this Example we may see how different Cir-  
“ cumstances may combine to place Persons equally  
“ upright in the main, in different Points of View, in  
“ regard to certain Truths.

“ Here now are our two *Jews* in the same degree of  
“ Uprightness, and equally faithful in obeying their  
“ Consciences. By which means, one is brought to  
“ the clear knowledge of Evangelical Truths : the o-  
“ ther still remains in the dark, in that respect. But  
“ this Obscurity cannot render him culpable ; it comes  
“ from foreign Causes, in which his Will has no share.  
“ Had he been in the same Circumstances as *Benjamin*,  
“ he too would have become a Christian.

“ From all which it may be concluded, that one is  
“ not less agreeable to God than the other ; though  
“ under

“ under a different Name; and that he is not a *Jew* or a *Christian*, who is outwardly such.”

*Philo.* You will give me leave to pocket the *Jews* in my turn, *Erastus*; I have a mind to be acquainted with them; and though they are *Jews*, I shall not be ashamed to receive their Instructions concerning the Essence of Christianity.

*Crito.* You imagine then, *Philo*, that you need only ask to the prejudice of others, in order to obtain your Request immediately. Take notice that I oppose you in this Point; and I, as much a Lawyer as you are, you shall not deal with me so easily as you imagine.

*Philo.* Well, *Crito*, will you refer the Matter to *Erastus*?

*Crito.* I submit to all he shall say; he need only pronounce.

*Erastus.* Since I must decide the Matter, each shall take the Article he has read.

*Crito.* On that foot, *Philo* is to pocket *Joseph*, and *I Benjamin*. I think myself well off, and readily submit to the Sentence.

*Philo.* So do I, *Crito*, on condition that we change to-morrow.

## DIALOGUE XI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* DO you know, *Erastus*, that after our yesterday's Bargain, *Philo* was very unwilling to part with *Joseph*, when he had got *Benjamin*? He wanted to keep them both; and I believe would have done so, had not he seen you coming.

*Philo.* I should have kept them only till this Evening, *Crito*; and you might have obliged me so far. I perceive this *Joseph* has several Lessons in store for me, and that I am far from being at the bottom as good a Christian as he is.

*Crito.* Dear *Philo*, what do you mean?

*Philo.* I mean, *Erastus*, that I should think myself very

very happy, if my Will was in such an *Equilibrium*, as not to resist the Impression of any kind of Truth, whatever I might suffer for it.

*Erasmus.* You would be so much the happier, *Philo*, in having surmounted all voluntary Obstacles to the Impressions of Truth, as you would then have very few of those we have called involuntary. The Sect in which we are born has this advantage over the others, that it doth not form so strong an Opposition in us to all that may come from another Quarter. We make a Profession of leaving the way of Examination open to all the World. In our time particularly Men insist more than formerly on not judging of things by the Eyes of others, or by such Prejudices as Education may have formed. Freedom from Prejudice, Impartiality, and Toleration in point of Opinion are in vogue; and though several value themselves on them, without well knowing what they are, they thereby give others an Opportunity of making use of them.

*Philo.* It is certain this Way has its Advantages for those who are willing to receive the Truth without restriction, and without setting bounds to it; involuntary Obstacles are thereby removed. We should not have enjoyed the same Liberty in the time of rigid Orthodoxy; what Profession soever was then made of leaving no Restraint on Men's Consciences, they were still kept under a sort of Slavery, something like Infalibility, from which it was impossible to disengage one's self, without passing for a Heretic and a dangerous Man.

*Erasmus.* That Spirit is not every where extinguished; we still see several Marks of it among those who cannot suffer it in their Neighbours.

*Cato.* That Spirit of Tyranny in Matters of Religion, seems extinguished among us more than any where else.

*Erasmus.* Though it seems extinguished, we perceive some Sparks of it still remaining in several Persons, when they happen to be shock'd by some strong Truths.

*Philo.* Why must Truth, which, in a certain Sense, has so many Charms, be in another so burdensom, not to say insupportable?

*Erasmus.* If you would understand this, dear *Philo*, you must distinguish original and universal Truth, which is always *one*, from particular and distinct Truths, which are numerous. The latter proceed from the former, and depend on it as the Rays on the Sun; whereas the former is as independent on the latter, as the Sun is of its Rays.

Excuse me, if this Comparison is somewhat lame. You know it is a common Fault in Comparisons; and may be much more easily committed, when we are comparing spiritual things with material.

*Simple, universal Truth* has always existed in God; before any Creatures were in being, it was what it now is, and ever will be. It has acquired nothing by their Existence, and can lose nothing, though they were annihilated.

*Particular Truths* are only a Consequence of the Existence of the Creatures. Were there no Creatures, there would be no particular Truths. As the Creatures are several, and distinct one from another; the Truths, which are relative to them, are also several and distinct one from another.

These Truths are all that can be known of the Works of God, as well in inanimate or irrational, as in animated and rational Beings.

All the Manifestations which God has made to Man of his Designs in general, and of the particular Means, which may conduct them to Happiness.

Here now is a very plain Distinction between simple or universal Truth, which is but one, and particular or distinct Truths, which are many.

Conscience is in all Men a Witness of simple Truth; it is \* *invariable* and *upright*, without Ambiguity, incapable of Correction, being itself the Rule which ought to correct every thing opposite to it. The Disorder and the *Falsè* which is found in Man, naturally

\* See the second and third Letters of *Erasmus* to *Crito*.



produce in him a secret and strong Aversion to all that can reform him. He dreads the Testimony of this simple Truth, the Authority of which often commands Respect, even against his Will, and which he cannot contradict. Not being able to contradict it, he at least does all in his power to avoid hearing it. To compass his Ends the better, he makes use of a Stratagem; he throws himself out of himself, and applies himself entirely to Study or the Knowledge of particular Truths. In their Variety he finds Charms and Advantages, the most considerable of which, is that of forgetting himself, and almost putting it out of his power to understand the too sincere Language of simple Truth.

*Philo.* I imagine, *Erastus*, I guess what you aim at. The Contrast which I see in Man, in regard to Truth, disappears, or is unfolded by the Distinction you have made. I conceive, that by the Truth, which has so many Charms for him, and of which the Generality of Mankind as so greedy, we are not to understand simple Truth, which is one; but distinct or particular Truths, which are many.

*Erastus.* It would be great pity, dear *Philo*, to explain things better to you, since you understand them at half a Word.

*Philo.* However, *Erastus*, I beg you would explain what I am going to ask you.

Among particular Truths, I place those which relate to Religion, and are revealed in the Scripture. Why do the same Truths, which when taken in a certain Sense, give Men no pain, become insupportable to them, when viewed in another manner? I know some learned Men, who profess themselves never tired of the Study of Religion. The Beauties they discover in it charm them; but then they dare not consider it in a certain Light, and they would take it very ill, were they forced to fix their Sight on it.

*Erastus.* Man can suffer nothing from the particular Truths of Religion, only as they contribute toward awakening in him the Testimony of Conscience or

simple Truth. The most pressing Truths are Diversions to those who view them in a controversial or critical way. Hence arises a Diversity and Motion, which are of great service to one who dreads hearing the simple Language of Truth too distinctly. All the borrowed Ornaments which Men employ for giving, as they pretend, more Force to certain Truths, disfigure and weaken them, by drawing them out of their natural Simplicity.

Though, strictly speaking, only *primitive* and *universal Truth* is simple, yet particular Truths, as they proceed from the same Truth, have likewise in their Origin a sort of Simplicity, which unites them to simple Truth. By the natural Relation between them, one should be the Key to the rest ; *simple* and *universal Truth* should be to *distinct Truths*, what Light is to Objects. Without losing any thing of its Simplicity, it discovers their Diversity and Differences ; it shews them such as they are, provided they are not disguised by any thing foreign to their Nature, and the Eye be free from all Obstacles which may hinder it from seeing them.

Hence I conclude, that were the Truths of Religion divested of all those Disguises put on them by Men ; were they presented in their utmost Simplicity to Men, in whom Conscience is not quite extinguished, those very particular Truths would naturally refer them to simple and universal Truth ; as simple Truth would conduct them insensibly, and by degrees, to the distinct Knowledge of particular Truths.

*Crito.* I know not where I am, *Eraslus* ; methinks this is the first Day that I begin to have a Glimpse of Truth. Your Distinction between simple universal Truth, and particular Truths, opens my Eyes to an Infinity of things. I see what made me so warm in the pursuit of what I called Truth.

*Philo.* I now understand why I relish'd certain Truths, which you explain'd in our Walks, while most of them gave me inexpressible Pain. Those which had a tendency to overthrow certain vulgar Opinions, certain  
common

common Practices, which are a sort of Pedantry in Religion, gave me much pleasure. But as you dwelt most on Truths which shocked me, by awakening a something that condemn'd me, I have pass'd my Time but very indifferently.

*Erastus.* Dear *Philo*, you demonstrate, by your own Experience, the Truth of what I just now said concerning the Relation between particular Truths, and simple Truth, when they are presented in a certain Light, that is, simple in their way.

*Philo.* I think I understand you, *Erastus*. The Truth, which regards the Existence of Conscience, is certainly one of the most simple, and what ought to refer us most directly to Conscience itself. But had you discuss'd the same Truth in a critical or controversial manner, setting forth the different Opinions of Divines on that Subject, instead of feeling Pain, I should have been well diverted with it, and perhaps more so than with any other Entertainment. But, as you refer me to what I feel and experience, and my Sentiment, being thus awakened, said much more to me than your strongest Expressions, I was tormented more than can be imagined.

*Erastus.* You would have suffered much less, *Philo*, had you yielded sooner to the Testimony of Truth, which attack'd you both within and without at the same time.

However, the Correspondence, which subsisted in you, between those two Testimonies, shews that their Way was not obstructed by very strong Obstacles. Those who have raised almost unsurmountable Barri-  
cades between themselves and Truth, feel less Pain for a time; but know not what Torment their Conduct will one day give them.

*Philo.* I have not forgot an Expression, which you let fall on that Subject, in one of our Walks. The Substance of it was, that Truth will lose none of its Rights; and that sooner or later, in this Life, or in the next, we shall be obliged to restore all we have usurp'd from it. I then experienced what you have

said to-day, that particular Truths, as they are simple, naturally and directly refer a Man to the simple Testimony of Truth. That Expression sent me immediately into myself, and I was so sensibly affected with the Truth of it, that I had no need to ask you for Proofs of it.

*Erastus.* The most simple Truths are, by their Relation with the primitive Truth, so much above Proofs, that they appear doubtful only when Men attempt to prove them. *The bare Idea or Sense we have of them, proves their Existence.* Thus the Existence of Conscience is proved by its Language: it is heard; therefore it exists: its Testimony is invariably right; therefore it is infallible: its Testimony is infallible; therefore the particular Truths which it adopts are undoubted; and that purely because they want no other Proofs.

Is this good Reasoning? What say you, *Crito*? Have I any Cause to regret the Expence I have been at in learning so fine a Science?

*Crito.* You are not yet acquainted with the greatest Secrets of that Science, *Erastus*; and therefore you may regret your Expence. The Truths which you have been proving, are in themselves so evident, that all the Syllogisms in the World can make no addition to them. The Art would lie in finding Arguments for Demonstration of the contrary. Yours amount to this: it is Day; therefore Light exists: I see that Light; therefore I have Eyes. I cannot doubt of what my Eyes see at Noon-Day. Now they tell me I am in the Walks, and that *Erastus* and *Philo* are on each side of me; *ergo*, the thing is undoubted. I need no other Proofs. Pray tell me, *Erastus*, what is the great Effect of this Argument? Have we now more Certainty than before, that it is Day, that Light exists, that we have Eyes, and that we are walking?

*Erastus.* The great Effect of this Argument is, that I have begun to doubt, whether it be Day, whether I have Eyes, and whether I am walking with *Crito* and *Philo*.

*Crito.* You see, therefore, dear *Erastus*, that your Skill is not great, when you undertake to prove only such Truths as are more evident in themselves than by all the Arguments that can be used. The Art would be to demonstrate, for example, that it is not Day at present, that we are not walking; and that, when our Eyes tell us we are, they deceive us.

*Philo.* In reality, what would be the Use of Syllogisms, if we were only to demonstrate that it is Day at Noon; and if they did not furnish us with the Secret of proving clearly, that Black is White, and White Black? But, Raillery apart; it is good to have to deal with such refined Philosophers as *Crito*; he immediately understood the Tendency of *Erastus's* Arguments, and then carried on the Jest at his Ease. I own I am duller of Apprehension, and did not at first comprehend what *Erastus* would be at.

*Erastus.* It is evidently ridiculous to employ Arguments or Syllogisms, to demonstrate things, which have nothing doubtful in them, and to which Sense bears an incontestable Evidence. It is a mere Banter to undertake to prove to a Man who has good Eyes, that he is not blind; he knows more of the matter from his own Sense, than by the most demonstrative Proofs.

*Philo.* Men seem to have attempted to stifle the Sense of simple Truth, by the Crouds of Proofs and Arguments, which they have advanced for establishing certain particular Truths.

*Erastus.* Or rather, for establishing certain Opinions, to which they have given the Name of Truths, as appears from the Opposition and Contrariety of the same Opinions; whereas Truth cannot contradict itself.

*Crito.* Dear *Erastus*, this is a Syllogism in form; for the future you shall not be allowed to condemn the Use of them.

*Erastus.* If I fall into them without knowing it, *Crito*, how can I help it? However, I must tell you, that if I have appeared an Enemy to Syllogisms or Arguments, it is not the Form that offends me, but the Use made of them for obscuring the True, and

giving a Colour to the *False*. By this Art the Doctors of each Sect have found means to give the most contrary Opinions the Face of Truth, which has made them pass under that Name. Thus they have shewn, that Truth may be opposite to itself, and still be Truth. Is not this a wonderful Art?

*Philo*. It seems that Truth has been an Apple of Discord among Men ; a Subject of Division, and the Occasion of Battles more bloody than those fought at the Siege of *Troy*.

*Crito*. In reality, it cannot be easily determined whether it has been more advantageous than disadvantageous to them ; and whether it had not been better . . . . Where are you, *Erastus*? Did you hear what *Philo* has been saying?

*Erastus*. I heard him so well, that his words have thrown me into my *Reveries* ; and I believe I shall be good for nothing else to-day.

*Philo* to *Crito*. That is as much as to say, we shall do well to retire, and let him muse at his leisure.

*Erastus*. You guess so well, dear *Philo*, that I have no Reply to make.

*Crito*. Here we must do ourselves Justice, with a good Grace, and that without much Disinterestedness. *Erastus's Reveries* have hitherto done us no harm ; and how do we know . . . . .

*Philo*. I understand you, *Crito* ; and so let us go, without making any farther bargain.

## DIALOGUE XII.

*CRITO and PHILO.*

*Crito*. **D**O you know, *Philo*, that our Friend did not lie in Town last Night? I sent to his House this Morning, and his Servant said he had not seen him since yesterday, that probably he was gone into the Country.

*Philo*. His *Reveries* may have carried him insensibly to N's Seat. He will not be allow'd to return soon.

I should be patient under the Loss of his Company, if he would make us Amends by communicating his *Reveries*.

*Crito*. Perhaps he has done that.---What will you say, *Philo*, if I guess'd right?

*Philo*. I shall say you have a mind to set up for a Conjuror; but I'll let you see I am as much so as you; for I imagine you play a sure Game.

*Crito*, taking a Letter out of his Pocket.] Here is a Letter, that was delivered to me, as I came out. Do you know that Hand?

*Philo*. It is *Eraustus's*; and, which is more, the Letter is directed to *Philo*: if you beg hard, I will communicate the Contents of it to you.

*Crito*. You would not be very well pleas'd, *Philo*, with keeping it to your self. Shall I read it?

*Philo*. With all my heart, *Crito*; but we must retire into the Shade. There is a Bench, shelter'd from the Sun.

*They sit down, and Crito reads.*

A LETTER from *Eraustus* to *Philo*.

“ S Ince you gave occasion to my *Reveries*, *Philo*,  
“ you shall be plagued with them. You laugh at  
“ the Penance; but perhaps it will not prove so easy as  
“ you imagine. How do you know whether while I  
“ am in my *Reveries*, I may not carry you into some  
“ desolate Country, or some Labyrinth, out of which  
“ you will not easily find your way? If so, blame  
“ only your self, or your Comparison of the Apple  
“ of Discord, since that gave birth to my *Reve-*  
“ *ries*.

“ I shall not tell you that they led me insensibly to  
“ N's Country-House, where I am at present. They  
“ have made me take another Road, which I will  
“ trace out to you, if I can. You shall then tell me  
“ whether you are in the Humour of bearing me com-  
“ pany.

“ At first I found my self in a Labyrinth, when I  
“ was considering Truth under the Emblem of the

“ Apple of Discord, as the Cause of all the Debates,  
 “ Divisions, and endless Contests, which reign among  
 “ Men. What is Truth? said I: Is it a Good, or an  
 “ Evil? Can the World dispense with its absence?  
 “ Can it even subsist without it? And would not the  
 “ Idea of a World without Truth be an Idea of a  
 “ Chaos. But, once more, What is Truth? Here I  
 “ recollected the Distinction we made yesterday between  
 “ simple, universal Truth, which is *one*; and distinct  
 “ or particular Truths, which are *many*. I found this  
 “ Distinction might be of great use in several re-  
 “ spects; but that, in a certain Light, it was still  
 “ imperfect, or stood in need of some Explanation.  
 “ I thought that, at the bottom, distinct Truths  
 “ were of so different a nature from simple Truth,  
 “ that they could not be called by the same Name.

“ It must be acknowledged, our Language is so  
 “ barren of Expressions, that we are often obliged to  
 “ employ the same Terms for expressing things very  
 “ different.

“ For example, what two things are more different  
 “ than *simple, universal Truth*, living, eternal Truth,  
 “ the Source of all Truth, is from a Fact, done at such  
 “ a Time, in such a Place, and attended with such Cir-  
 “ cumstances, which is called Truth? Men give the  
 “ same Name to the different Senses they pretend to  
 “ find in the Scripture. Every one adheres to that  
 “ which he has adopted, defends it, and supports it as  
 “ the only one that is passable, exclusive of all the  
 “ opposite Senses. Should not the Word *Opinion* be  
 “ here used in its place? This will appear, if we con-  
 “ sider that, among those opposite Senses, some are  
 “ infallibly false, and perhaps more so than are true:  
 “ They may therefore be term’d true or false, as taken  
 “ in general. Men talk of true or false Opinions;  
 “ but they never think of speaking of true or false  
 “ Truths.

“ Truth is always Truth. If what has appear’d to  
 “ us true at one time, appears false at another, we do  
 “ not say that Truth is become false; but that we  
 “ mistook Falshood for Truth. “ Truth



“ Truth then remains always invariable. It is never opposite to itself; what it was yesterday, it is to-day. On that foot, is it the Apple of Discord? or is that Appellation due to the Opinions, which Men have graced with the Name of Truth? Here certainly is the Explanation of the Riddle; and plain good sense cannot disown it. That alone tells us, no one can give what he has not: that Light cannot produce Darkness: that what is simple and uniform cannot produce Division and Contrariety. Thus Truth is clear’d of the Disorders, which it has seem’d to cause among Men; and at the same time Men may be undeceived as to the Passion they have seem’d to entertain for Truth. Here is a Key, which opens one of the Doors of the Labyrinth; but yet we are not quite out of it; fresh Difficulties are to be surmounted; and this among others.

“ Has not God manifested the Truth to Mankind in the Holy Scripture? And is it from the Scripture that Men have drawn those opposite Opinions, which have produced endless Contests? This being granted, the Scripture has been to them a real Apple of Discord. But the Holy Scripture is Truth; therefore what may be ascribed to the Holy Scripture, may be ascribed to Truth.

“ Men are fond of the Opinions they have embraced: they have found them in the Holy Scripture; the Holy Scripture is Truth; therefore Men are fond of Truth. These now are very strong Arguments; I would endeavour to answer them, was I not seized with a Drowsiness still more strong, to which I am absolutely obliged to yield. I reserve the Remainder of my *Reveries* till to-morrow. If I do not give you them in Writing, perhaps you may have them in the Walks.”

*Crito.* Well, *Philo*, what say you to our Friend’s *Reveries*?

*Here Erastus comes, hides himself behind a Tree, and listens to the Discourse.*

*Philo.* I say he had good reason to make me expect

pe& they would lead me into a Labyrinth, out of which I should not easily find my way. But I think him a little malicious, for carrying us in, and then leaving us to get out as well as we can. If I write to him, I shall rattle him off to some purpose.

*Crito.* You are resolved to be angry in your turn then, *Philo*; and do not observe that *Eraſtus* has already done you a ſignal piece of Service in diſengaging you from the Embarraſſment into which you had brought him by your Objection about the Apple of Diſcord. He only could have clear'd up the Matter.

*Philo.* I condemn my ſelf, dear *Philo*, and perceive I am coming into a good Humour again. My Impatience to hear an Answer to the Arguments, with which he concludes his Letter, had put me into an ill one. I believe, if he does not return to-day, I ſhall be tempted to go to him.

*Eraſtus*, (*without being ſeen.*) Do you want a Conveniency for carrying you thither?

*Philo.* Is it a Spirit we hear?

*Crito.* Whence came that Voice? We muſt arm ourſelves with Courage.

*Eraſtus*, *appearing.* Without doubt, ſince it is the Voice of a Magician.

*Philo.* Be as much a Magician as you pleaſe, we are not much afraid of you; but who would have ventured to hope to ſee you here to-day? I was apprehenſive that *N.* would detain you ſeveral days longer.

*Eraſtus.* He would have done ſo, had it been in his power; but I made my eſcape without aſking leave. I went thither in a *Reverie*, I left the Houſe in a *Reverie*, and meet you here at the time appointed, to - - -

*Crito.* Do you know, *Eraſtus*, that *Philo* was in a great paſſion with you, ſome moments ago?

*Eraſtus.* In quality of a Magician, I have had Information of it; and came to offer him all the Aſſiſtance in my power, for getting out of the Labyrinth, in which I had left him.

*Philo.* I charged you with a little Malice, dear *Eraſtus*; but I ſee it was none of the blackeſt, any more than

than the Magic which enables you to guess so exactly. You have without doubt brought the Sequel of your *Reveries*.

*Eraſtus*. I am too much a Man of my Word to fail in that Point. To prevent their eſcape, I have made no ſcruple of committing them to as cloſe a Priſon as I did our two *Jews*. I ſhall deliver them into your hands, that you may make what uſe of them you pleaſe.

*Philo*. I think that will be to read them; and that we have time enough for doing ſo.

*He reads.*

“ In reply to the Arguments propoſed, I ſay firſt,  
“ that the Holy Scripture is, properly ſpeaking, not  
“ Truth, but a Teſtimony of Truth. This Teſtimony  
“ is expreſs’d in Words ſuſceptible of different Senſes;  
“ every Man has there found a Senſe ſuitable to his  
“ Paſſions or Prejudices. The Prejudices and Paſſions  
“ of Men, being always oppoſite, have produced Di-  
“ viſion by the oppoſite Opinions, which proceed from  
“ them. Here now is the Apple of Diſcord. If the  
“ Scripture has been the Cauſe of ſuch Diſcord, as it  
“ cannot be denied, is Truth answerable for it? All  
“ that may be attributed to the Scripture, cannot in  
“ every Senſe be aſcribed to Truth. If Men are fond  
“ of Opinions, which they have drawn from the Scrip-  
“ ture, it doth not thence follow that they are fond  
“ of Truth. Such Opinions are their own Work,  
“ the Fruit of their own Penetration and Diſcernment;  
“ they depend on the particular Senſe which Men have  
“ fixed to ſuch or ſuch Paſſages of Scripture. That  
“ particular Senſe appear’d to them moſt proper for  
“ ſupporting their Party in oppoſition to all others.  
“ They would be mortified if Truth ſhould detect the  
“ Falſity of it. On that foot, of what are they fond?  
“ Of Truth, or of themſelves?”

*Philo*. Here now is enough for undeceiving Men in regard to their pretended Paſſion for Truth. And I muſt own that, till now, I have loved only the Shadow and Appearances of it; and begin to believe no Cha-  
racter

rafter so uncommon in the World as that of a sincere Lover of Truth.

*Eraſtus.* But, dear *Philo*, where ſhall we find ſuch an one? A Man who ſets no Limits to Truth, makes no Reſiſtance, but is willing to receive it at all hazards, and in what manner ſoever it may preſent itſelf; a Man, who, when he gets a Glimpſe of it, will not enquire, before he allows it Entrance, whether it reproves or applauds him, whether it oppoſes, or chimes in with his own Opinions and Inclinations; whether it may not diſconcert the Plans he has formed; in ſhort, whether it may not prejudice his temporal Interſt, his Reputation or his Fortune: a Man, I ſay, who without debating on the Matter, ſhould open all Paſſages to Truth, would be a Phenix in his kind.

*Philo.* I think I know one, whom this Picture reſembles.

*Eraſtus.* I perceive you have *Eraſtus* in view. Be pleaſed to remember that this Picture is very different from what he drew of himſelf ſome days ago. Let me refer you to it\*. I will add, without the leaſt Affectation of Modeſty, that I ſo often catch my ſelf in a ſecret Oppoſition to Truth, whenſoever it oppoſes my Inclinations, that there is no need of Arguments for proving it.

*Philo.* If my Lady *Modeſty* had not loſt all Credit with you, I ſhould have been ready to place her here; but you have unluckily ſhut her out. Do you know that I frequently bewail her Abſence? For example, when I am obliged to believe my Friends literally in what they ſpeak to their own diſadvantage; and much more, when I perceive I ſhall be believ'd in what I may ſay of my ſelf in the ſame way; and that no Abatement will be made, in order to place it to the Account of Modeſty. Is not this very mortifying? And is ſhe not very ſerviceable to ſuch as admit her into their Company? They may lay what they pleaſe on her; not to ſay, that ſhe is of uſe for keeping up Converſation,

\* Dialogue IX.

which would be soon exhausted, if Truth alone was admitted.

*Crito.* Now you speak of Truth, shall we go on with *Erastus's Reveries*? Where did we leave off?

*Philo.* I had finished the Article, in which it is proved that Men, instead of being fond of Truth, are fond of their own Works, and of the Opinions they have framed. He proceeds thus :

“ I may be called on to prove what I have advanced,  
“ viz. that all that may be said of Truth cannot be  
“ justly applied to the Scripture ; and that, on the  
“ contrary, what may be said of the Scripture cannot  
“ be apply'd to Truth. What difference do you make  
“ between them? I ask in my turn, what Difference  
“ is there between a Testimony given in favour of a  
“ Person and the Person himself ; between a Differta-  
“ tion on Light and Light itself? Such is the Diffe-  
“ rence between the Scripture and Truth. The for-  
“ mer is a Testimony in favour of the latter ; but it  
“ cannot be called Truth, unless the Term be taken  
“ in an improper Sense, as *Serenus* understood it the  
“ other day of a Manuscript, which treats of the Stars.  
“ He ask'd *L . . . . .* if he had brought the Stars.  
“ This way of speaking never deceives any Man in  
“ things that fall under the Cognizance of the Senses.  
“ A Book which should contain the Picture of a Prince,  
“ his History, the Form of his Government, &c. was  
“ never taken for the Prince himself ; and you may  
“ say as often as you please, that you have *Lewis XIV.*  
“ in your Pocket, without exciting Laughter.

“ But the Case is not the same in regard to Truth.  
“ Men have insensibly fallen into Mistakes : They  
“ have made the Testimony stand for Truth itself :  
“ they have persuaded themselves that being perfect  
“ Masters of the Scripture, as their Phrase is, is being  
“ Masters of Truth : they have called it the Light,  
“ the infallible Guide ; in a word, pure Truth. They  
“ have stopt at the Testimony, and thus render'd it  
“ useless, and hinder'd its effect ; nay more, they  
“ have actually turn'd it against themselves. Our Sa-  
“ viour,

“ viour, for Example, tells the *Jews* that *the Scriptures testified of him*; but that they would not come to him, to have Life.

“ To what purpose is a Testimony, of which Men will make no use? It only serves to condemn those, who profess to receive it. *Moses, in whom you place your hope, will condemn you.*

“ The Holy Scripture is in regard to Truth what *John* the Baptist was to *Jesus*. We read that St. *John* was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness of the Light. This gives us a compleat Idea of the Relation between the Holy Scripture and Truth, and at the same time shews the Difference between them.

“ Truth consider’d under the Emblem of Light, employ’d me a long time in my *Reveries*. I found natural Light a visible Representation of Truth or spiritual Light; and that what the former is in regard to Bodies and sensible Objects, the latter is, in a very eminent degree, in regard to Spirits and invisible Objects: that there is no other difference between those two Lights than what ought necessarily to subsist between the Copy and the Original; between a Material and Spiritual Being; between a Being void of Understanding or Life, and a living intelligent Being; between a created and an uncreated Being. That in other respects, their Properties and Effects are exactly the same in regard to their proper Subjects. But it will be asked, is Truth uncreated? Can that Epithet be applied to any but God?

“ I ask in my turn, whether simple, primitive Truth has any Beginning: whether there ever was a Time, when it did not exist, and if it is possible to separate it from the Divinity one Moment; or whether the Idea of the Divinity and that of Truth are not inseparably connected? I think no Man will dispute this; it is therefore incontestable that simple Truth has always existed in God, and in nothing differs from God himself.

“ Here

“ Here the distinction, we made yesterday between  
“ *simple* or *universal Truth*, and *distinct* or *particular*  
“ *Truths*, takes place. It shews us the difference be-  
“ tween created Truths and uncreated Truth. The  
“ latter is *one, simple* and *universal*: the former are  
“ *many, distinct* and *limited*. Was I talking to stupid  
“ Persons, I should here explain how the Idea of Sim-  
“ plicity, Universality and Unity are inseparably  
“ connected.”

*Philo.* I am stupid enough, dear *Erastus*, to own I should be pleased with such an Explanation.

*Erastus.* You are unlucky, *Philo*; you give yourself the Character of Stupidity, only to make me talk of things which you know better than I do. Were you a Child, I wou’d tell you that what is *Universal* is *one*; because there cannot be two universal Beings: for if they were two, each wou’d be a particular Being, not the universal Being.

If Universality and Unity are inseparable, Simplicity is not less so from both. What is simple must be universal; otherwise it wou’d not be simple. What is not composed of several Parts is one: what is one, is simple. We have demonstrated that what is one is universal. *Ergo*, what is simple is universal, and one; as what is one, is simple and universal.

Well, Gentlemen Banterers, need I go any farther? How they laugh in their sleeve at having made me deal in *Ergo’s* in spite of my Teeth.

*Philo.* This is just what we desired of you, *Erastus*; methinks, with all your Aversion to Syllogisms, you know well enough how to make your advantage of them.

*Erastus.* A wonderful advantage, to be able to demonstrate, by a Set of Syllogisms, such things as are obvious to every Man’s Eyes, as soon as he will open them.

*Crito.* Let us go on with our *Reveries*; give me them, *Philo*, I will read in my turn.

*Erastus.* I think we had better reserve the sequel for to-morrow, and at present think of walking to Town.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* I will put the *Reveries* in my Pocket then. I see *Philo's* Jealousy ; but with his leave, he shall be satisfied with the beginning of them. I shall not now part with what I have ; it is enough that I promise to give a good Account of them to-morrow.

## DIALOGUE XIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **I** Have waited here half an hour with the *Reveries* in my hand. You imagine, perhaps, that I was very impatient for your coming ; but indeed I was not ; I found the loss of your Company sufficiently made up to me by the Pleasure that . . . . .

*Philo.* A very obliging Speech truly ! To prefer the *Reveries* of your Friends to your Friends themselves.

*Erastus.* More obliging than you imagine, *Philo* ; my Self-Love is not less agreeably flatter'd by the Reception, which *Crito* gives my *Reveries*, than by what he wou'd give my Person.

*Philo.* You are always talking of your Self-Love ; one wou'd think you made it your Business to persuade us you are influenced by that Passion in all you do.

*Erastus.* *Philo* is always entertaining fine Ideas of me. I wou'd fain know which is most to my Commendation ; to deceive you to my own advantage, or to my disadvantage ; that you should think me better or worse than I am.

*Philo.* A pleasant Question ! If you allow us to appeal to the Voices, or rather the Practice of all honest Men, you will find it immediately decided, that it is infinitely better to deceive Men to our advantage than to our disadvantage, and appear better than we are rather than worse. If the Question is to be decided by the Number or Plurality of Voices, *Erastus*, you are condemned, since you maintain it wou'd be better for you to appear a less honest Man than you are.

*Erastus.*



*Eraſtus.* The unanimous concurrence to the Deciſion, wou'd ſhew how much Credit Truth has in the World.

*Crito.* The advantage of being applauded or eſteem'd will excuſe us, if we ſometimes make free with it.

*Pbilo.* But are you not apprehenſive, *Eraſtus*, of injuring Truth, by appearing leſs good than you are ?

*Eraſtus.* The hazard is not conſiderable on that ſide, dear *Pbilo* ; and I am very ſenſible that whatever I ſay, you will always think me better or leſs bad than I am. I muſt tell you, however, that I have no fix'd deſign of deceiving you, to my own diſadvantage ; I only intended to let you know, that if that could happen, and if, while I acted naturally, I ſhould give you room to think me worſe than I am ; I ſhould run leſs hazard by ſo doing, than if by acting leſs naturally I gave you room to ſuppoſe me better than I am. Will you know the reaſon ? It is, becauſe in the former Caſe Truth wou'd ſooner or later undeceive you ; and in the mean time, I ſhould make my advantage of your Miſtake. Whereas the Caſe wou'd not be the ſame on the other ſide, as I ſhould give occaſion to your Miſtake, by offending againſt Sincerity or Truth ; which wou'd be revenged on me, by humbling me in proportion to the falſe Elevation, to which I aſpir'd. By undeceiving you in that Point, it wou'd give me the utmoſt Confuſion.

*Crito.* Dear *Eraſtus*, you have now given me a glimpe of more Truths than you have explain'd. You frequently have the other World in view, when you are ſpeaking of Truth, and the Reſtitutions we ſhall be oblig'd to make to it ſooner or later. But is there no way of knowing what Idea you have of that other World ? You talk of it ſo familiarly, that one wou'd think you have a Correſpondence there.

*Pbilo.* I have often had the ſame Queſtion at my Tongue's-end.

*Eraſtus.* Would you have me, in quality of a Magician, raiſe ſome Spirit from thence ? If ſo, you muſt tell me of what Colour you wou'd have it.

*Crito.* I perceive that, in quality of a Magician, you want to get rid of us; but you shall not escape this time. As much a Magician as you are, you shall give us a direct and plain Answer.

*Eraslus.* You will excuse my answering you to-day, dear *Crito*, if I promise you, on the Word of an honest Magician, to put a Manuscript into your Hands, that will give you more Satisfaction than I can.

*Crito.* Shall we allow him Quarter on these Terms, *Philo*?

*Philo.* Yes; provided it be not something we have seen already.

*Eraslus.* Have you seen a Manuscript, entitled, “ Various Sentiments of some Divines concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies, in fourteen Letters?”

*Philo.* I have seen nothing of that sort.

*Crito.* Nor I.

*Philo.* Let us take his Word, *Crito*; and in the mean time, return to our *Reveries*: They are in your hands. Shall I read them? Where did we leave off yesterday?

*He reads.*

*Crito.* I have the Place.

“ Uncreated Truth is *one*, *simple* and *universal*.  
 “ Created Truths are *several*, *distinct* and *bounded*.  
 “ Here again, the Similitude of Light takes place;  
 “ which, without losing any thing of its Simplicity,  
 “ discovers an Infinity of different Objects.

“ The Diversity of Objects, which Light exposes to  
 “ view, is an Emblem of the Diversity of particular  
 “ Truths. Simple Truth discovers them in their true  
 “ Light. That only shews their true Distinction and  
 “ Relations.

“ As the Objects, display'd by the Light, are very  
 “ different from Light itself; so distinct or particular  
 “ Truths, manifested by simple Truth, are very different from simple Truth itself. We observ'd yesterday, that particular Truths are relative to Creatures: that some of them are refer'd to inanimate and irrational Creatures, and others to intelligent Beings.

“ The

“ The first of these Truths are called *Physical*: the  
“ second *Moral*. Physical Truth falls partly under  
“ the Cognizance of the Senses, and partly under that  
“ of Reasoning. What we know of them by Sense or  
“ Experience is not doubtful or ambiguous; what we  
“ know of them by way of Reasoning, varies *ad infi-*  
“ *nitum*.”

*Eraclius*. Stop one moment, if you please, *Crito*.  
We are not here disputing in a philosophical manner,  
concerning the Nature of Objects, which are known  
by the Evidence of the Senses, but concerning the Effect  
or Impression made by the same Objects on the Sen-  
timent; an Impression which never varies. It is to  
no purpose for Men, to pretend to demonstrate by  
Reasoning that Fire is not hot, Honey not sweet, Snow  
not white, &c. The Question is not, I say, whether  
Fire is hot; but whether the Impression, which I re-  
ceive from it, is not invariably the same; whether, for  
example, there be any doubt that on putting my hand  
into the Fire, I shall feel what is called Burning. As  
I speak to Philosophers, I am obliged to prevent such  
Objections, as they might make in that Character; and  
apprise them they have to do, not with a Naturalist,  
but a *Reveur*, who is telling his *Reveries*. They wou’d  
get no honour by engaging with him; as a *Reveur* who  
does not love fighting, he wou’d soon quit the Field.  
Now, *Crito*, you may go on, when you please.

*Crito*. Here is a *Reveur*, who thinks he may take all  
manner of Liberties, and even that of bantering the  
poor Philosophers. He should not come off so, were I  
not afraid of interrupting our Reading.

*He reads.*

“ *Moral Truths* are of a nature relative to that of a  
“ free and intelligent Being. They tend to let him  
“ know what he is, and whence he derives his Origin;  
“ the end of his Creation, and the means he is to take  
“ for arriving at, and attaining it.

“ The same Truths, more detailed and particulariz-  
“ ed, help him to perceive the Obstacles in his way to  
“ that End; and at the same time, point out the Road

“ he is to take, and the most proper means for surmounting those Obstacles.

“ These Truths re-unite or comprehend all that can be called *Religion*. By that Term I understand, not only what has been reveal’d to Men in the Law or the Gospel ; but what is termed *Natural Religion* ; such Truths as Men might have known without, by the Testimony of Nature, and within by that of Conscience.

“ This is the Foundation of the Christian Religion ; Christianity adds nothing to it, as to the Substance and essential Part ; but serves to explain it, and shew Men the use they may make of it. It, in a particular manner, manifests the designs of the Creator over his Creatures, the Love he has for them, and the Proofs he has given them of that Affection. It affords sensible Proofs or Testimonies of all this. These are public Facts, Examples, Miracles, and Precepts explain’d. Such Particularities may be termed *distinct*,  
 “ o *particular* Truths.

“ These Truths have been communicated to us in the Writings of Persons chosen by God for that purpose : who testify what they have seen or heard. Such is the Idea they give us of their own Writings ; and this demonstrates the Truth of what we have advanced, *That the Scripture is not Truth, but an Evidence of Truth*. I add, that, as the Men, who have given this Evidence, were inspired, or directed by God in what they wrote, we may call the Scripture an exteriour or indirect Evidence, which Truth gives of itself.”

*Philo.* I find that what has been read, by re-uniting Religion almost into a Point, places it in a Light very different from that given it by those Divisions and Subdivisions, by which it is usually describ’d.

*Crito.* Do you not likewise observe, that by this Reunion, we discover a distinction of three things, commonly confounded together, by being equally called Truth : *The Holy Scripture, particular Truths, and universal Truth.*

*Eraſtus.* Nothing diſtinguiſhes Objects better than what re-unites them. When a Man has once found the Center, he will be eaſily carried, by the ſeveral Lines, to the Circumference. But thoſe who reſt ſatisfied with running round the Circumference, and examining each Line ſeparately, may deſcribe the Surface of the Circle without ever coming to the Center.

Truth is the Center and Soul of Religion; no Man will venture to diſpute it. But what Idea do we form of this Soul? An Idea of ſomething inanimate, of one or more Truths, to be learnt, believ'd and conſider'd ſeparately; ſome deſign'd for Speculation, others for Practice. This is the Idea, Men frame of Religion, and Truth, which is the Soul of it; or rather of the Truths, which are ſo many Souls of it; for if Truth is not *one*, and Religion is compoſed of ſeveral Truths independent one of the other, it muſt have ſeveral Souls, and at the ſame time ſeveral Centers.

*Philo.* This Compariſon explains a great Number of things. It ſhews how ridiculous the Ideas are, which the generality of Mankind entertain of Religion or Truth. I now underſtand why Truth has hitherto given me the ſlip, even when I imagined myſelf moſt ſecure of it. I contented myſelf with ſome of its Branches only.

*Eraſtus.* You have hit the Nail on the head. The Branches of a Tree, ſeparated from the Trunk, belong to the Tree no longer; becauſe they ceaſe to partake of the Sap. Particular Truths, ſeparated from ſimple Truth, ceaſe to belong to Truth, as they no longer partake of the Life of it. As ſoon as they ceaſe to belong to Truth, they belong to each particular Perſon who makes them his own; as the Branches ſeparated from the Trunk, by ceaſing to belong to it, belong to him, who has plucked them. He may indeed handle his Branches, give them what Form he pleaſes, and make very pretty Curioſities with them, which will place his Skill and Art in an advantageous Light. This has been the Practice of Men in regard to Truth, and the Branches they have pluck'd from it. They have

handled them freely : they have work'd them into all manner of Shapes, at pleasure : they have gain'd the Admiration of the World by the dexterity of their Wit, and the delicacy of their Genius, display'd in the Turn, the Form, and Variety which they have given to such common Truths.

They have still been called Truths, as the aforefaid Works retain the Name of Walnut-Tree or Olive.

But what do Men admire in those Works? And what is the Design of the Artist? Is it to make the Wood be admired; or the Art employ'd in working it? What is admired in a fine Treatise? And what doth the Author design we shall admire in it? Is it the Truth, of which he treats, consider'd in itself; or the manner in which he treats of it; the Turn, the Form, the Delicacy, in a word, the Sublimeness of his Genius? For your Satisfaction, tell him you have a relish for the same Truth, separately from his Book, and you will see how he will receive you. You will pass, in his Opinion, for a Man of as good a Taste, as I should in the Opinion of an Artist, on telling him I set as much Value on a rough Branch of a Walnut-Tree, as on the best of his Works.

I should indeed be in the wrong, if I set no Value on Works so curiously finish'd; as I should be unjust to an ingenious Author, if I had no regard for the Turn and Graces he might give to what he calls Truth. Each of those Works may have its Use: the former may amuse Children; the latter, Men of Sense.

In order to give every thing its true Name; let us call the Branches pluck'd from the Walnut-Tree, *dry Wood*; and the Branches of Truth, separated from universal Truth, *Opinions*.

*Crito.* May it not be added, that of those Branches, on which Men have bestow'd the Appellation of Truths, they have made little Idols, and offer'd Incense to them; unless it wou'd be more proper to say, they have paid that Compliment to the Skill shewn in the Form given them. Every one has set a Price on his own Performance, has given it a fine Name, into which that  
of

of Truth has always been foisted. Methinks, the Name of Truth is at present in each Sect, what *Diana* of the *Ephesians* was at *Ephesus* in *St. Paul's* time.

*Erastus*. Consequently, woe be to him, who should attempt to discredit the ingenious Works, which the Artists of each Sect make in honour of it. But where are our *Reveries* carrying us?

*Crito*. Shall I go on, *Erastus*?

*Erastus*. With all my heart, if you think it not too late.

*Crito*. We have time enough.

*He reads.*

“ Here then the whole of Religion is re-united in  
“ one Point: that Point is Truth: simple Truth is  
“ its Center: particular Truths are its Lines and Cir-  
“ cumference.

“ Particular Truths are of two sorts; some are in-  
“ separable from simple Truth: others are of a diffe-  
“ rent nature, and may be separated from it. The  
“ former depend directly on simple Truth, as the Rays  
“ depend on the Sun: the latter are like the Objects,  
“ which the Light shews, and therefore of a different  
“ nature from Light.

“ By this last kind of Truths, I understand Historical  
“ Facts, and the Circumstances relating to them;  
“ such as the Histories deliver'd in the Old and New  
“ Testament. I should think the Term of *True*  
“ wou'd suit these better than that of *Truth*.

“ But it will be ask'd, where lies the difference be-  
“ tween *Truth* and the *True*? In this, that the *True* doth  
“ not exist of itself; that, properly speaking, it has no  
“ Being existing or subsisting; but is always relative to  
“ some particular Thing, to some Fact, to some Cir-  
“ cumstance, or to the Connexion of Things.” This  
explains itself.

*Crito speaks.*

It is true that . . . . . By this Expression I confirm what you have just now laid down. The Word *True*, pronounced alone signifies nothing. I am ask'd immediately, what is *True*? Whether it be a Fact, or

something said, or the Relation between one Circumstance and another. So that it is easy to conceive that *True* and *Truth* are not one and the same thing.

*He reads.*

“ Truth exists of itself: it is the Origin of the *True*.  
 “ There is an Infinity of true things; but only one  
 “ Truth; I speak of simple and primitive Truth.  
 “ Truth ought to be decisive in regard to what is true,  
 “ that is, ought to distinguish it from what is *False*,  
 “ as the Light of the Sun enables us to distinguish the  
 “ true from the false, in the Objects it shews. This is  
 “ what I understand by particular Truths, which are of  
 “ a different nature from simple Truth, and to which I  
 “ think the Word *True* wou’d be more suitable than  
 “ that of *Truth*.

“ I now return to those particular Truths, which I  
 “ said were inseparable from simple Truth, and which  
 “ depend on it as directly as the Rays depend on the  
 “ Sun. In order to form the better Judgment of the Cir-  
 “ cumference, we must view it round from the Center.

“ Truth in its Center, *uncreated, simple, universal*  
 “ Truth, differs in nothing from God himself, as I said  
 “ before. Though God is *one* and *simple*, his Attributes  
 “ are, or appear to us, *many* and *different* one from  
 “ another; as Light, which is one and simple, seems  
 “ divided into an Infinity of Rays, which appear  
 “ distinct one from another.

“ Were I a Natural Philosopher, I wou’d say that  
 “ Light seems divided into several Rays, only by  
 “ the Limits it meets with, and its manner of reflect-  
 “ ing on the Eye. Without determining whether this  
 “ is true or not, in regard to natural or visible Light,  
 “ let us return to spiritual or invisible Light, of which  
 “ that is no more than the Copy; and we may safely  
 “ say, that all is *one* in God, though his Attributes  
 “ seem to us different.

“ In order to explain this Proposition, we must con-  
 “ sider Light two ways; as a *Cause*, and as an *Object*.  
 “ As a *Cause*, it is invariably *one*; and this is what we  
 “ called simple Truth. As an *Object*, it appears to our  
 “ Eyes



“ Eyes divided into several Rays, and this is what we  
“ termed particular Truths, which depend directly on  
“ simple Truth.

“ These particular Truths, like Lines drawn from  
“ the Center, are all we know of the Attributes of  
“ the Divinity : all that can be consider'd in it sepa-  
“ rately and distinctly ; as *Power, Wisdom, Goodness,*  
“ *Justice, and Truth.* I speak of *Truth*, as an Attri-  
“ bute or Object, not as a Cause ; because in that re-  
“ spect, Truth is the Center where all the Attributes  
“ meet.

“ The Attributes just now mention'd, are such as  
“ are most distinct to our View ; because God has by  
“ them manifested himself to intelligent Creatures in a  
“ more particular manner, than by his most simple  
“ Attributes ; which are naturally so indivisible, that  
“ we can distinguish them from the Center of simple  
“ Truth only as Objects.

“ By this kind of Attributes, I mean *Eternity, Uni-*  
“ *ty, Infinity, Immutability,* and others of the same  
“ nature, which cannot be view'd distinctly, but as  
“ the Lines in the Point where they cease to be such,  
“ and become a Center.

“ Thus it appears how all Religion is re-united in  
“ the single Point of Truth ; and how what we call *dis-*  
“ *tinguish* or *particular* Truths, result from this single  
“ Point, which is the Center.

“ But in what Class shall we place the Holy Scrip-  
“ tures ? In that which is proper for them in quality of  
“ an *Evidence of Truth.* In that quality they will be a  
“ lively description of the Center, the Circumference,  
“ and the Lines which pass from one to the other.  
“ Round the Circumference will appear the several Hi-  
“ stories of Men of all times, their different Conduct  
“ in relation to the Center, and what they have done  
“ in order to keep at a distance from it, or to approach  
“ it.

“ This is all that can be required of an *Evidence*, and  
“ this is what the Scriptures paint to the Life. They de-  
“ scribe it as spiritual Objects can be describ'd ; that is,  
“ by

“ by such Expressions as represent invifible Objects,  
 “ in the fame Manner that material Colours represent  
 “ vifible Objects.

“ But I may be called on to explain what I have advanced; *that the Scriptures are an Evidence, which Truth gives of it felf without, or indirectly.* This is  
 “ eafy; and to keep clofe to the Comparifon of a Picture, thofe who drew this, had the Original before  
 “ them: They could not give Evidence of the Light,  
 “ but as they themfelves were enlighten’d: They testify only what they have feen and heard. Truth,  
 “ when it was revealed to them directly, was the Cause  
 “ or Principle of their Evidence; but the Evidence  
 “ which Truth gives of it felf, by the Organs it  
 “ chufes, is only indirect in regard to other Men.  
 “ It is an exteriour Evidence, or a coarfe Image of  
 “ Truth; an Image which can be of no ufe, but as it  
 “ refers every one to the Original, to the direct Evidence of fimple Truth, or Confcience, which is its  
 “ Echo.

“ Is not this fufficient for *Reveries*? At leaft, it is all  
 “ I can think of at prefent; and *Crito* and *Philo* muft  
 “ be fatisfied with this, under the penalty of making  
 “ fuch additions to it as they fhall think proper.”

*Crito.* Here is a Sample of *Reveries*, which might afford one Matter for fome time.

*Philo.* Were we as good *Reveurs* as *Erastus*, this would carry us very far. I muft defire him to tell me his Secret.

*Erastus.* I believe you have a mind to make me Profeflor of *Reveries*. I perceive I muft haften my Departure, or you will oblige me to play the forced Phyfician. You have already extorted much more from me than was proper. It happens unluckily for me, that you have pocketed them, fo that I cannot take them back. While they were reading, I could not forgive my felf for fpeaking in a manner, which fo ill becomes a *Reveur*, talking to Philofophers. The worft is, that a *Reveur* cannot affign a Reason for his *Reveries*; he gives them for what they are, without

out troubling himself to justify or defend them.

*Philo.* The Thought of your leaving us is really shocking. I am now very serious. Do you remember, *Crito*; that, before *Eraſtus* went into the Country, I pretended to be very ſorry for his Departure? I own at that time I had a ſecret Pleaſure at his going; not only that I might be ſecure from the Reproaches which my Conſcience frequently made me in our Walks; but alſo ſtop the rapid Progreſs, which I obſerved you made with him, and of which I was extremely jealous.

*Crito.* I found you full of Reſignation, *Philo*, at our Friend's Departure; but did not imagine you quite ſo eaſy under the Loſs. The wiſe World is very artful. It makes its advantage of every thing: it takes a pride in, at the ſame time, expreſſing a Concern for a Friend, and being courageous enough to bear his Abſence. This Stroke ought to be added to the Picture, which *Eraſtus* drew of the wiſe World. But I remember it is there already.

*Philo.* You dare not go on and tell me it is contain'd in *Eraſtus's* Account of Hypocriſy, Double Dealing and Jealouſy. Speak out boldly, *Crito*; be not ſo apprehenſive of offending me; I am not quite ſo captious now, as I was then.

*Crito.* We have had *Eraſtus's* *Reveries* ſince that time. They have in a little time made a conſiderable progreſs in *Philo's* Mind. They muſt have ſome weight with him, to cauſe ſo great a Change in his Language.

*Philo.* And I am very well pleas'd with having given occaſion to them. I am caught by the very Endeavours I made to guard againſt them. The Objections which I ſtarted in oppoſition to the Language of Conſcience, or to render it ſuſpected, made me ſenſible I had one; that its Language was not to be deſpised, and that ſuch a Contempt would not always eſcape with impunity.

The Letters, or *Reveries* of *Eraſtus* on Conſcience, made me ſenſible of this in a thouſand Ways. I there found a Deſcription of what I felt within my ſelf; the different

different Parts I play'd in regard to Conscience, the Art I us'd for making my advantage of that of other Men, and rendering the Language of my own useless. But what struck me most, was the Close of his third Letter. The Effect of it was such as I cannot describe ; and I perceive it affected me so strongly, only as it sent me more directly to Sentiment and Experience.

*Crito.* I find the *Reveries* contain'd in those Letters, have a near Relation to what we have read to-day ; and must explain one another. I shall read them again with pleasure, in order to observe that Relation more distinctly.

*Philo.* I long to do so as much as you, *Crito* ; and I fear this will become a Subject of Dispute between us.

*Erastus.* That the Dispute may not run so high, and that you may not come to Blows for *Reveries*, I believe we shall act prudently in leaving this Place immediately.

## DIALOGUE XIV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Erastus.* **W**ELL, *Crito*, is the Dispute ended at last ?  
*Crito.* Yes, *Erastus*, and without Effusion of Blood. I hope *Philo* and I shall quarrel no more, unless you set us together by the ears again with some new *Reveries*. If that happens, we shall not be displeased with our Quarrels on those Terms.

*Erastus.* I am a peaceable Man, *Crito* ; it shall not be said that I sow Discord among Friends. Besides, I am one of those fantastical *Reveurs*, who do not produce their *Reveries* as they are bespoke. But now we are talking of *Reveurs*, here is a Man\* who is in a fair way of being one in good earnest. Dear *Philo*, where are you ? A hundred Leagues from this Place, I am certain.

*Philo.* I was in your *Reveries*, *Erastus* ; and methinks

\* Looking on *Philo*.

it was not kind in you to awake me out of them.

*Erastus.* If I may be so inquisitive, pray in which of them was you?

*Philo.* In that we read last. I take that to be the Key to all the rest, and think it may help us to solve all the Difficulties in Religion, which have hitherto seemed most considerable. I had some of several sorts, which I intended to propose to you; but as I was perusing those *Reveries* last Night, I found most of them answer'd.

*Crito.* I have sufficient Reason in my turn to be jealous of the Progress *Philo* makes every day in the Art of *Reveries*. I own he exceeds me in that Point.

*Philo.* How do you know that, *Crito*? You judge by Appearances then; because you have observed me wear the Air or Mien of a *Reveur*, you immediately conclude me an Adept in the Art like *Erastus*. At that rate, how many heavy, melancholy, stupid Block-heads might pass for Adepts, while they are silent. I beg you would not confound our Friend with Persons so different from him in Reality, though they may in some measure resemble him in Form; I speak of the Time when he is actually engaged in his *Reveries*.

*Erastus.* Let us have done with the Reality and the Form, so far as they may relate to *Erastus*; and let us own they are extremely different when consider'd in themselves. From the universal Blindness of Men in that regard, proceed their erroneous Judgments, both in the common Course of Life, and in what concerns Religion.

*Crito.* It is true, the Character of an honest Man and a Christian is now-a-days settled by Form and Appearances. Is any thing farther necessary for establishing his Reputation? Great Numbers sit down contented with these; and as the Case stands, I know not whether, if the Choice was propos'd, to have the Reputation of a good Man, without being so, or to be a good Man, without the Reputation of such; I know not, I say, whether many would chuse the latter.

*Philo.* Now you speak of being a good Man, I remember

member the Definition *Erastus* gave us the first time we saw him. He told us, in short, that a good Man and a Man devoted to God were the same. I could not object against this Definition; but I reduced this Idea of being devoted to the Divinity to a small Point. I thought no Principle of Religion more reasonable, more incontestable, or more universally received than this; and yet I know not whether any thing is less known than the Reality of this Devotion, or more strongly opposed by Men, though without their own Knowledge.

*Erastus.* That is precisely the main and essential Part of a Christian's, or good Man's Character, which few give themselves any Concern to acquire. The Form and Appearances are put on with less trouble, and do a Man as much, perhaps more, nay infinitely more Honour.

What can be the Reason of that? It is because the Reality of this Devotion requires that a Man should not himself chuse the Form or Appearances; but that he be ready or disposed to receive the different Forms, according to the Will of the Master, to whom he is devoted. This is supposed in the Forms of Prayer used in public. What Protestations do we not there make of being devoted without Reserve? *Thy Will shall be the Rule of our Conduct, and thy Glory the End of all our Actions.*

Ask some one of the Congregation, whether he conceives the Nature of this Engagement, he will tell you, it consists in *consecrating to God our Mind and our Body, as a living Sacrifice, and without Reserve, every thing that is in us, and depends on us, to be employ'd in his Service* \*.

But have you any Idea of this Sacrifice without Reserve? Do you understand what it is to propose the Glory of God as your End? Are you acquainted with this Rule, by which you protest you design to regulate your Conduct? Here a Man would be puzzled; not

\* Other Expressions taken from the same Form of Prayer.

only one of the most ignorant sort, but perhaps one of those who pass for the most devout and knowing.

If we have not so much as the Idea of it, what will become of the Reality? The Consequence will be, that it will not be distinguished, and consequently will be opposed where-ever it is; and thus what we were saying concerning the extreme Distance between the Substance, and the Form, Reality, and Appearances, will be made good.

*Philo.* Had you ask'd me the same Question some Weeks ago, *Erastus*, I should have been pretty much at a loss for an Answer. I believe, that, to get rid of you, I should have ask'd you in my turn, whether those Prayers were not noble, and fit for raising the Soul? For so I have heard them defined by several.

*Erastus.* And I perhaps, in my turn, should have ask'd you, Whether Expressions ought not to be the Images of Thoughts and Sentiments? You would certainly have granted it. On that foot, I should likewise have granted, that the Words I have quoted from the Forms in question, are beautiful Images of what makes the Reality in a Person devoted to God. I should then have left you to judge, whether this Original is every where to be found, and whether the Image can be fit for raising the Original, or is only fit for representing it?

*Crito.* It has been thought a bold Charge to reproach Men with contenting themselves with beautiful Ideas concerning Religion; but in this Particular, they are satisfied with less. They amuse themselves with fine Words: insensibly take them for the Reality; and make a great noise with the Terms *Consecration, living Sacrifice, being absolutely devoted, &c.* Have they any Idea of what is meant by them? I own it is not long since I have conceived any; and believe, had I been attack'd on that Subject, I should have been obliged to define them by some synonymous Words; the common Shift of such as know Things more by Expressions than by Ideas.

*Erastus.* At that rate, how far are Men from being  
able

able to distinguish Truth exactly! And are we to be surprized, if they substitute Appearances in the room of Reality, of which they have not even the Idea? Of what, for example, have Men less the Idea, than of the Reality of those Words lately quoted: *To make the Will of God the Rule of our Conduct, and his Glory the End of all our Actions?* What is the Glory of God? and what is meant by proposing it as the End of all our Actions? It is an Engagement; and one would think Men ought to have some Idea of what they engage to perform. I could wish that those, who renew this Engagement every day by a Repetition of the Words, would explain themselves on the Idea they fix to them.

*Philo.* That would be requiring too much, *Eraustus*. I know some People, who, to embarrass you in their turn, would ask you whether you disapprove of the daily Repetition of those fine Words.

*Eraustus.* My Answer to that Question would be soon ready. I would tell them, that such as have in themselves the Reality of what those Words express, may repeat them as often as they please, without danger of injuring Truth and Sincerity: that, as for those who are guilty of Falshood in the Repetition, it is their Business to judge in what Rank they place themselves, and what hazard they run. This would be my whole Reply: Their Conscience, if listen'd to, would explain the Matter farther.

*Crito.* But, dear *Eraustus*, were you ask'd what Idea you yourself entertain of this Engagement, what Answer would you give?

*Eraustus.* I would say, *Crito*, that the Glory of God is a Subject so far above my Capacity, that I dare not attempt a Definition of it. I say the same of the Disposition, by which a Man proposes that Glory as the end of all his Actions; that Disposition, which I admire, and which must necessarily be the Result of the most refined Love, is so widely different from the Disposition of a Beginner like me, that I can form no distinct and clear Idea of it. Do not pretend to dispute the



the Appellation of a Beginner with me; I confess myself such, in all respects; and much more so in regard to these sublime Dispositions.

As to the Will of God, and the Disposition by which a Man chuses it for the Rule of his Conduct, I can speak of them only from what I have learnt by a Beginning of Experience. I will say therefore, that Men can know the Will of God only by the Light of Truth, or by the Testimony of Truth.

Truth bears witness for itself, in two manners, as a Cause, and as an Object, directly and indirectly: directly within, by each Man's Conscience: indirectly without, by the Organs, which it has inspired or directed in their Writings; and this is what we call the *Holy Scripture*. As a Cause and simple, Truth acts immediately on the Conscience, it is felt before it is perceived: as an Object, it is perceived much more by its Effects than in itself. The Light of the Sun is an Emblem of it; it acts on the Senses as a Cause, before it becomes the Object of Perception. Even when it is perceived as an Object, it is of so simple a Nature, that we distinguish nothing particular in it, unless it be by the Objects it discovers, and the Reverberation from Bodies on which it is reflected.

I return to Truth, which is *Light*, as *St. John* calls it; and I say, that if its first Office is to act on the Sentiment or on Conscience; the first Duty of the Creature in respect to it is to consent to receive its Impressions, to open his Eyes in order to perceive the Objects it discovers, and the Path it points out. The Consent comes into play; so that by a determinate *Yes* or *No*, a Man may open the Door to, or shut it against the Light. Here, in a word, the Integrity of the Will decides, and becomes in Man the Key of Knowledge, the Introduction to Truth.

It is Matter of Fact that the Light of the Sun neither is perceived, nor gives us the Perception of any Object, if we shut our Eyes, with a Design of not seeing. Nothing depends more on Man's free Will than the opening

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ing or shutting his Eyes, and turning his Sight from certain Objects, in order to fix it on others.

Nor is it less certain that Truth can make no progress in Man, but in proportion to his Consent to give it Entrance, and that he gives it Entrance only by obeying it.

In proportion as Truth is obeyed, it more distinctly shews the Road we are to take; it serves as a Guide in that Road; interiorly by Sentiment, or the simple Language of Conscience: Exteriorly it shews the same Way pointed to the Life, in the outward Testimony it bears of itself. I speak of the Holy Scripture. This Scripture declares we can know the Truth, or the Will of God, only as far as we are determin'd to obey it without Reserve; that *those, who are of God, bear the Words of God, because they have the Testimony of God within them.*

Thus Truth is the Soul and Center of Religion. Thus it is the Rule which rectifies all Things, without being capable of Correction, *the Light which manifests all Things, and without which we cannot see whither we are going.* I speak here of *simple, universal, uncreated Truth, the Source of all Truth*, which has existed in God from Eternity, and which is call'd in Scripture sometimes *Wisdom*, sometimes the *Word*, sometimes the *Light*, and sometimes *Life*.

It is this Truth, I say, which the Scripture testifies to be the Light and the Life. To this Light it refers Men for Information, and Direction in discerning Truth. Such as make a proper Use of this exterior Testimony which Truth bears of itself, and give room within themselves for the direct and simple Testimony of Truth, without Reserve, really devote themselves to God, *offer themselves to him as a living and holy Sacrifice, without Reserve, and take his Will for the Rule of their Conduct*, being guided by Truth itself.

These have within themselves the Reality of those Words, which all profess to admire as beautiful, and which are so to him who pronounces them, only as far  
as

as they are the Image of his Disposition. Is it necessary now to ask, who is fit to repeat them? It is every one's Business to enquire what Truth and Sincerity may allow him to do.

*Phil.* You have, before you was aware, answer'd several of the Difficulties, I design'd to propose to you, *Eraſmus.*

I should have ask'd you, for Example, how Truth can act on the Sentiment? I find my self answer'd by the Comparison of Light, which is felt without being perceived, and by your adding, that Truth acts on the Sentiment, as a Cause, as something living and operating.

I should likewise have ask'd, whether Conscience is, properly speaking, simple and primitive Truth? I find an Answer to this Question in your saying that Conscience is a direct Testimony of simple Truth, a Voice or Language in which it expresses it self; that Conscience, in short, is the Echo of Truth.

I find from what you have advanced, in what Sense you before said that its Language is infallibly that of Truth; that it is invariably the same, the Rule by which all things ought to be rectified, without being capable of Correction it self, the *Light which cannot be enlightened, but which ought to be allow'd to enlighten us*, by removing the Obstacles which oppose it.

Thus I find the whole of Religion really reunited in the single Point of Truth: that Truth being *One*, leads such as admit its Testimony interiorly, to admit the Testimony it gives of itself exteriorly in the Language of the Scripture, as the Scripture constantly refers us to that of Conscience.

I find that these two Testimonies, having one and the same Truth for their Principle, agree perfectly well, and mutually assist each other. Methinks the Distinction of *Truth* and what is *True* might take place here: that Conscience, as the Echo of Truth, ought infallibly to lead to the Discernment of what is *True*, in the Language of the Scripture; and that it ought to be the Business of what is *True* to reduce all things to *Truth* as its Origin.

*Crito.* As you go on, *Philo*, *Erastus* was not much in the wrong when he said \* the Lawyers go through with whatever they undertake. You have made so exact a Reduction of several Truths to one Point, that *Erastus* would find it a hard matter to explain things better.

*Erastus.* I should have been very much puzzled how to do it in so few Words.

*Philo.* I have not done yet; and you shall see I am going to act like *Esope's* Raven; in order to make you admire my fine Voice, I will communicate the Sequel of my *Reveries* on those of *Erastus*.

*Crito.* You will be very much surprized, *Philo*, when I tell you we are not in the Humour of hearing your fine Voice to-day. I believe it is time to be gone; but we shall lose nothing by the Matter; we will reserve the Sequel of the Song till to-morrow. What say you, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* I think it a good Thought, *Crito*; and the more so, because if *Philo's* Voice should chance to prove of an enchanting nature, like that of the Sirens, we should be in danger of staying here all Night.

*Philo.* If you at first began to spoil me by your Applause, you soon repair the Damage by making me put up my Compliment, without asking my Consent. However, I must take the honour of it to my self, and thank you for this friendly Office.

## DIALOGUE XV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Erastus.* **D**EAR *Philo*, we are now ready to hear your fine Voice.

*Crito.* Mr. Raven may begin when he pleases.

*Philo.* You interrupted me yesterday, *Crito*, in the middle of my Period; and have made me so effectually forget my Compliment that I cannot possibly recollect it.

*Crito.* In the mean time, till you can recover it, I must tell you what happen'd to me yesterday. I

\* Dial I.

I had left *Erastus's* three Letters, or *Reveries*, concerning Conscience, on my Table. Young *Fortunatus*, of whom I was speaking the other day, laid his Hands on them. He had no sooner cast his Eye on the first Page, but he express'd a great desire of reading them; and was so pressing in his Demands, that I could not refuse him.

That Instant I was call'd away, and left him alone in my Chamber near half an Hour. In that Interval a Lady, who was in the next Room, went into mine, and found *Fortunatus* employ'd in reading. She insisted on knowing what he was reading: he made a Secret of it; which increas'd her Curiosity. She imagined they were Letters of Gallantry, suspected certain Persons of being in the Intrigue, shrugg'd up her Shoulders at their want of Conduct, and, not being able to obtain a sight of them, return'd to the Room from whence she came, where she found a Company of Ladies, to whom she communicated her Conjectures. You may imagine they built Castles in the Air, and each of them made some new Discovery in the Mystery.

During these Transactions, I return'd to my Room, where *Fortunatus* told me what had pass'd. But by way of Parenthesis, I must give you the Character of the Lady in question. She is a Person pretty well advanc'd in Years, with a Gravity suitable to her Age, prudent and wise, and devout to a degree. She has a Genius for Reading, can reason on all Subjects, not excepting Divinity; if you have any acquaintance with *Urania*, you will know her by this Description.

*Erastus*. I know her only by Name. This is what they call a Lady of universal Merit.

*Crito*. I should now give you an Account of the other Ladies in the Company; but that would take up too much of our time. You are only to know they were of different Ages and Characters. Some grave, some merry, and others a Mixture of both.

They found some pretence for calling me aside, with a View of getting the Secret out of me: I diverted myself a good while with hearing their Conjectures; at last

I yielded, and gave consent that *Fortunatus* should deliver them the Letters in question. He offer'd to read them to the Company: *Urania* disputed the Point with him; being apprehensive he would not give them entire. *Fortunatus* gave up the Contest: *Urania* ran over three or four Pages, and expressed her Surprise. All the Ladies fixed their Eyes on her, and were desirous of knowing the Cause of her Surprise. 'Tis, says she, because I do not understand this Way of Writing: One does not know whether it is serious or jocular. Several very different Subjects are mentioned; such as Conscience, Truth, Musicians, Concerts, Magicians, Astrologers, a Prince in his Minority, a Regent, Vexation, Anger, *Reveries*, &c. Reconcile all this, if you please. These Letters, said I, must be penn'd by some *Keenur*; you will be able to judge of the Matter, if you will give your self the Trouble of reading them. *Urania* began, and continued to the end without interruption. It was very entertaining to see the different Looks of the Ladies. Some shrugg'd up their Shoulders: some seem'd tired: some express'd their Surprise; and others were in a brown Study. But the best Diversion was to hear them talk after the Letters were read.

*Erasmus*. You should have taken down their Remarks in Writing, *Crito*.

*Crito*. I did so; but took particular Care not to be observed. The Discovery would have made them quit the Place immediately. I told them I would leave them, to allow them more Freedom of Discourse. I then returned into my Closet, which you know is contiguous to the Room, where the Ladies were; and, as the Partition is very thin, I lost not one Word of the Conversation. At first I had some difficulty to understand them; for they poke all together, and it was impossible to write any thing. It happen'd luckily for me, that one of the Ladies made a Proposal of speaking one after another, as the *English* do. The Proposal was accepted: and, what was more surprizing, regularly observed. You shall see the Parts, that each of them acted on that Occasion.

*The Philosopher the greatest Cheat.* 119

(*Crito takes a Paper out of his Pocket, and delivers it to Erasius.*)

*Erasius reads.*

URANIA, SALOME, CLEOPATRA. Three Ladies almost of the same Class.

CLARIETTA, CECILIA, FAUVETIA. Of the Class of Waggs.

NEREA, EVODIA, SYNTICHE. Of the mix'd Class.  
FORTUNATUS. The only Man.

*Urania.* “ Ladies, what think you of this Way of Writing?

*Salome.* “ I own I think it very extraordinary. It cannot be denied but here are some good Things, such as are said, for example, concerning Truth and Conscience. But, after all, who disputes it with the Writer? Who doubts that the Language of Conscience is that of Truth? Methinks there is no Necessity of undertaking to prove what is so evident.

*Cleopatra.* “ Certainly; and Things are render'd more dubious by too nice Enquiries into them. I am for keeping the high beaten Road, as our Forefathers did; People in our Age imagine themselves wiser than they. For my part, I suspect every thing that favours of Novelty. I stick fast to the old Rock; that is always the safest Way; is it not?

*Urania.* “ No doubt; though we are not to reject, without Examination, every thing that has some Appearance of Novelty. I stand by the Maxim of trying all Things and holding fast what is good. What shocks me in these Letters, is the Mixture of Banter and serious Discourse; nothing seems to me worse put together. The Author shews by that his Want of Judgment.

*Salome.* “ I was just going to make the same Remark. Every thing ought to be in its proper Place. Not that I am an Enemy to Mirth and Gaiety. I am particularly pleased to see them in young People; but when the Discourse turns on Religion or Truth, 'tis another Affair. On such Occasions one ought to be grave and serious. What think you, Ladies?

*Cleopatra.* “ I am entirely of your mind ; there  
 “ is a Time for all Things ; a Time to discharge  
 “ the Duties of Religion, by the public and private  
 “ Exercises it prescribes, and a Time to be merry and  
 “ divert one’s self.

*Urania.* “ The worst is, that young People are so  
 “ fond of being merry, that they cannot, without the  
 “ utmost difficulty, pass from Gaiety to the Gravity  
 “ which the Exercises of Religion require.

*Cleopatra.* “ That is so true, that I have no small  
 “ difficulty to prevail with ours to acquit themselves  
 “ of those, which are the most indispensable. This is  
 “ the Humour of young People ; every thing that fa-  
 “ vours of Devotion or Seriousness lays them under  
 “ Constraint ; and I am of opinion that, if some Care  
 “ was not taken in that Point, they would have no  
 “ Religion at all.

*Urania.* “ I am of your opinion ; and ’tis what gives  
 “ me much trouble. But now you speak of young  
 “ People, let us make these young Ladies talk a little,  
 “ that we may know their Sentiments on what we have  
 “ read. Take notice how they form themselves into  
 “ a separate Company, with *Fortunatus*. They are  
 “ afraid of being put on the serious Strain one mo-  
 “ ment. Are you not, young Ladies ?

*Clarinda.* “ On the serious Strain ! We are deeply  
 “ engaged that way ; and are making our Remarks  
 “ on the Letters.

*Urania.* “ Be pleased to communicate them to us.

*Clarinda.* “ I was saying that, to speak freely, I  
 “ should be more capable of judging whether a Head  
 “ is well dress’d or not, than of distinguishing what  
 “ is most valuable in these Letters. But, after all,  
 “ the Smile of our *Reverend* hits my Taste pretty well ;  
 “ and if all serious Discourses were written in this  
 “ manner, they would be read with some pleasure.

*Fauveta.* “ I ingenuously confess’d that on seeing the  
 “ bare Title of such Letters, and that of some little  
 “ Songs, I should have given the preference to the  
 “ latter. After such a Declaration, who would have  
 “ imagined



“ imagined that I could have attended so long without  
“ being tired one Moment. And I doubt whether  
“ these Letters have not had certain Charms for me,  
“ which I never found in any Song.

*Cecilia.* “ For my part I own that, had I not  
“ thought them Letters of Gallantry, I should have  
“ left the Room before the Reading begun. When I  
“ understood what was the Subject of them, I was seized  
“ with Curiosity: I was desirous of knowing what fol-  
“ low’d; and found a certain *Je ne sai quoi*, which  
“ would not allow me to go.

*Urania, to the three other Ladies.* “ May we not  
“ know what you philosophical Ladies think of them?

*Syntiche.* “ Pray, Madam, how long has that fine  
“ Title been my Due? Have I deserved it for my Skill  
“ in Spinning? I leave it to *Erodia*, and *Nerea*, as  
“ their Right. They, who have studied Logic, may  
“ justly be called by that Name.

*Nerea.* “ I neither pretend to be a Logician nor a  
“ Philosopher; however, a little Logic never does any  
“ harm. It may be useful in enabling one to distin-  
“ guish, in what one reads, Truth from Falshood, the  
“ Matter from the Form, and the Substance from the  
“ Accidents.

*Salame.* “ See how learned she is; ’tis a pleasure to  
“ hear her talk. I take her to be one of those who  
“ are best able to form a sound Judgment of the Let-  
“ ters in question.

*Urania.* “ Perhaps she is. Some Persons with their  
“ good Sense alone have as much Judgment, as o-  
“ thers with all their Logic. But you have not yet  
“ given your Opinion, *Erodia*. You have, however,  
“ a double Right to do it, both as a Logician, and a  
“ Person of Wit.

*Erodia.* “ I freely acknowledge, I would willingly  
“ give all my Logic for the least of these *Reveries*, or  
“ for the Secret of thinking in this Manner. Logic  
“ never made me feel a certain *Je ne sai quoi*, which  
“ these *Reveries* have awaken’d in me. And that *Je*  
“ *ne sai qui*, being once awaken’d, has said more to  
“ me than the *Reveries* themselves. *Ne-*

*Nerea.* “ Without valuing Logic too much, I place  
 “ it at its due Value. The little Knowledge I have of  
 “ that Art has enabled me to observe several Faults  
 “ in the Letters in question. There are such Instances  
 “ of false Constrúction, which would induce one to  
 “ think the Author never studied Grammar. The  
 “ Tenses are frequently confounded: the Verb with  
 “ the Adverb; and Genitive Case with the Ablative.

*Clarietta.* “ We have a Right to enter an Action a-  
 “ gainst him.

*Fortunatus.* “ In reality, to pretend to write *Reveries*,  
 “ without being a Grammarian, is not allowable.

*Evedia.* “ So, Mr. *Fortunatus*; shall it be said that  
 “ you remain behind the Curtain, without explain-  
 “ ing your self? You shall not come off without tell-  
 “ ing us your Opinion.

*Fortunatus.* “ What Opinion can you expect from a  
 “ Libertine, like me, in Matters where Religion is  
 “ concern’d? It is well enough known that I have hi-  
 “ therto had no great acquaintance with it; judge then  
 “ whether I should be a proper Person for the Task  
 “ you impose on me. All I can see of the *Reveries*  
 “ in question is, that I have read them with some plea-  
 “ sure, and heard them read with more. I did not  
 “ indeed observe whether the Author was a Logician,  
 “ or a Grammarian; but in quality of a *Reveur*, I  
 “ think he has not perform’d ill; and believe that his  
 “ *Reveries* would go farther toward reconciling me to  
 “ Religion, than the most eloquent Discourses.”

*Crito.* Here *Fortunatus* look’d on his Watch, and  
 told the Ladies it was past Eight: the whole Company  
 decamp’d, and thus ended the Scene.

*Philo.* Could you have expected, *Erastus*, to find  
 here, at once, the Diversion of a Walk and that of a  
 Comedy?

*Erastus.* I did not expect to be so well entertain’d.  
 You see, after all, that the *Reveries* are good for some-  
 thing, were it only to make the Ladies talk.

*Crito.* And give them an Opportunity of shewing  
 their Wit and Judgment. I was ready to break out  
 into

into Laughter, particularly when the young Lady talk'd of Logic and Grammar. You shall see our Logician will make fine Comments on the *Reveries*. She desired to take a Copy, in order to shew them, as she said, to better Judges. No doubt she means some Gentleman, who is both an able Grammarian and Logician. The poor *Reveries* will be prettily decypher'd.

*Erastus*. A great Honour truly for a Logician to amuse himself with decyphering *Reveries*, and quarrel with a *Reveur*. This would be but barely pardonable in a Lady, who professes that Art. It is remarkable that your Ladies attack'd only the Form and the Terms, without excepting against the Things.

*Crito*. I had a strong Inclination to lay down my Pen and answer them; especially when I heard it graciously decided, that Gravity and Religion are two distinct Articles: that every thing ought to be in its proper Place; &c.

*Erastus*. This confirms what we were saying some time ago; that the Idea of something gloomy and sour was in the Minds of several, annex'd to the Idea of Religion: that hence young People conceive such a Dislike to it; and acquit themselves of those Duties, which they think most indispensable, only with Constraint. It is diverting to hear it said that, if great Care was not taken of them in this Point, they would have no Religion at all. Have they a greater share of it, when they act the Grimace of it?

*Crito*. There are Men in the World, who would answer, that this is something, however.

*Phil.* Would a Man be satisfied with such a Reply?

*Erastus*. Every one pretends to hate Grimace. A Man can not bear that another should practise it on him, while at the same time, he practises it on himself; and is satisfied with himself on those Terms.

*Crito*. This is what I, some time ago, called a Want of Honesty in regard to ourselves, and what our Friend *Philo* did not comprehend.

*Philo*. Rather say, I would not comprehend it. I pretended Ignorance, while at the bottom I perceived well

well enough it was my own Case. What you said gave me much Torture, by referring me to my Conscience, which in its turn spoke much more to me on that Subject.

*Crito.* You see *Erastus's* *Reveries* occasion'd somewhat like this in one of our Ladies, as much a Logician as she is.

*Erastus.* Your two Logicians seem of very different Characters ; which proves that things produce good or bad Effects in Men, only according to the good or bad Use made of them.

*Philo.* Hence it may be concluded that the Disposition of the Heart renders exterior Things good or bad ; not that exterior Things render the Heart good or bad.

*Erastus.* That is a grand Principle, confirmed by the Gospel, and which extends much farther than to the Use of Food. Men know how to make an advantage of it in what is agreeable to themselves ; but are unacquainted with both the Substance, and Essence of it.

*Crito.* You make me remember, *Erastus*, that, to justify my own Inclinations, I have frequently made use of these Words: *To the Pure all things are pure.* It remain'd only to know whether that was my Case ; whether my Heart was really pure. This I chose rather to suppose, than examine to the bottom.

*Erastus.* You are not the only Person, *Crito*, to whom this has happen'd. The same Illusion has often led me into Mistakes. I have since imagined my self like a sick Man, who to follow his own Whims, should justify himself with this Maxim: *To the Healthy all things are wholesome.*

*Crito.* The Maxim is very true ; but the Application of it not always just.

*Erastus.* Men proceed exactly in the same manner with regard to Religion. They take out of the Gospel some Maxims, true in themselves ; but which cease to be so in respect to them, by the bad Application they make of them.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* By this means they have the Art of changing Truth into Fallhood. Is not this what the Scripture calls changing what is right into Wormwood. *Amos.*

*Erastus.* I know not whether the *Falsè*, that reigns universally among Men, is not more pernicious to them than the most disorderly Inclinations of corrupt Nature. 'Tis by the *Falsè* that those Inclinations are disguised and entertain'd, and even render'd such as not to be known. Were this not the Case, they would inspire a Horror, and find but little Refuge.

*Philo.* I know some, who being themselves under the Dominion of the *Falsè*, would ask you what you mean by that Term.

*Erastus.* The *Falsè*, as it manifests itself without, is, properly speaking, the Art of Disguising. How many Mysteries doth this Art cover, both in civil Society and religious Affairs! This Art may be called the universal Key, or the *Passe-par-tout*, proper for letting every one in to his own Pretensions.

In order to know what the *Falsè* is in the World, we need only, for a Moment, imagine the Metamorphosis we should see, were the Art of Disguising banished from among Men; were all Hearts to be laid open, and every one was obliged to think aloud. Thus we should be able to judge whether this Art doth not serve as a Mask, or Covering to all that is hideous and shocking; and whether being employ'd for hiding Evil, it doth not, at the same time, afford it Protection and Nourishment.

*Philo.* This is a good Demonstration of the Maxim, you just now advanced; since the *Falsè* is a pernicious Evil, not only in it self, but as it serves to support all sorts of Evils by the beautiful Appearance it gives them. So much for the *Falsè*, as it manifests it self without; but what is it in its Origin?

*Erastus.* Was you to ask me, *Philo*, what is Darkness, I should answer, that it is caused only by the Absence of Light.

I might likewise reply, that the *Falsè* is produced by the Absence of Truth. All the Difference here is, that,

that, properly speaking, Darkneſs is nothing ; whereas the *False* is ſomething. Bare Darkneſs is much leſs oppoſite to Light, than the *False* is to Truth. If Darkneſs gives us the Sight of no Objects, it doth not diſguiſe them ; whereas the *False* is a deceitful Glimmering, that diſguiſes all it ſhews.

Bare Darkneſs makes no Oppoſition to Light ; it gives place to it when it appears. The *False* oppoſes Truth, as the Light of a Candle produces a falſe Light at Noon. This Compariſon is not ſufficient for characterizing the *False* ; and here it ought to be rememb'ed that all Compariſons are lame.

*Crito*. I think I perceive the Defect of this. The Light of the Sun eclipses the falſe Light of the Candle much more, than the Candle can eclipse the Light of the Sun ; whereas the *False* oftner makes Truth diſappear, than Truth does the *False*.

*Erasmus*. Dear *Crito*, you do not fully comprehend my Meaning. If in one Senſe it is true, that the *False* has a greater Power to eclipse Truth, than Truth has to eclipse the *False* ; we are to ſeek for the Cauſe of th' Difference, not in Truth itſelf, but in the Obſtacles which Men place in its way.

Truth in itſelf would not have leſs Power to obſcure the *False*, than the Light of the Sun has to eclipse that of a Candle, did not Men voluntarily ſhut up the Avenues, in order to ſubſtitute the *False* in its place ; as it is in their power to ſhut up the Avenues againſt the Light of the Sun, in order to ſubſtitute a borrow'd Light in its room.

Let us ſay that, properly ſpeaking, *Truth in itſelf cannot be eclipsed by the False*, as the Light of the Sun cannot be eclipsed by that of a Lamp. But, as the Light of a Lamp, though it does not eclipse the Sun, eclipses the Light which it diffuſes on Objects ; and in that reſpect it may be ſaid that the falſe Light eclipses the true ; it may be likewiſe ſaid, that the *False*, though it doth not eclipse Truth, eclipses the Light which it diffuſes on Objects, and that that Light is nothing but the *True*, as we have diſtinguiſhed it from *Truth*.

Hence

Hence it is easy to conclude, that the *False* is properly the Opposite of the *True*: that, as it is the Property of the *True* to shew Objects such as they are, without imbellishing them; it is the Property of the *False* to shew them for what they are not, to disguise some by making them appear beautiful, and others by making them look ugly.

*Philo.* I might say, I have all my Life-time been under the Dominion of the *False*, without perceiving it; and, though I have no Idea of it, I but now begin to discern it. I, however, imagined my self very capable of distinguishing the *True* from the *False*. I even fancied I hated the *False* above all things; because I hated some of its Effects in other Men. Disguise, for example, appear'd horrible to me, when I saw it worn by others; but I imagined my self free from it, because I avoided what was most gross, while I made use of what was more refined. I should perhaps speak more correctly, if I said that my own Disguise was imperceptible, only because it was become as natural to me as Breathing.

*Crito.* This may be called defining things exactly. I am almost jealous of you, *Philo*, for explaining the Matter so justly. But, not to leave you the whole Honour, I add to your Definition, that the Art of Disguising appears no longer an Art in those in whom the *False* reigns; so natural is this Art become to them: that this Art is express'd much less by the Words they speak, than by the Face they put on, by their Eyes, their Gesture, and the whole of their Behaviour. As the Idea of Disguise is confin'd to saying, on purpose in a gross manner, the contrary of what we think, it is easy to flatter ourselves on that Article. We have now, *Erasmus*, consider'd the *False* in its Effects. It would be material . . . . .

*Erasmus.* I understand you, *Crito*; you would likewise consider the *False* in its Origin. This is not so easy; it is much less difficult to discover the Origin of the *True* than that of the *False*.

The Origin of the *True* is Truth, which has ever existed

isted in God. Consequently, the Origin of the *True* is eternal; and as it had no Beginning, so it will have no End.

This is not the Case in regard to the *False*. We certainly know, there was a Time when it did not exist: it could not exist, when God *was the only Being; when pure and simple Truth was all, and alone*. Where could the *False* find room then?

The *False* therefore has had a Beginning, and must have been posteriour to the Existence of Creatures, as being always relative to some particular Being; so that had there been no particular Being, there would have been no *False*.

*Crito*. I remember you said the same of the *True* or particular Truths; that if there had been no Creatures, or particular Being, there would have been no particular Truths. How is it possible that the two Opposites should result from the Existence of the same Creatures?

I have another Difficulty. If the Origin of the *True* is eternal, it cannot, in all respects, be the Opposite of the *False*, which had a Beginning.

*Erasius*. Though the Origin of the *True* is eternal, it doth not thence follow, that it had no Beginning. The *True* may be consider'd in two Respects; as relative at the same time both to primitive Truth, and to the Creatures.

In the first Respect, we may grant it had no Beginning: In the last, it is evident it is only the Consequence of their Existence; and in this Point the *True* and the *False* are precisely the two Opposites, or Contraries.

In order to discover now how it is possible that the two Contraries should result from the Existence of the same Creatures, we should know the Nature of those Creatures; an Enquiry, that doth not belong to a *Reveur*. All he can say of it, in that Character, is, that if the two Opposites, the *True* and the *False*, have been produced by some Creature, it must have been endow'd with *Freedom*, and *Understanding*.

*Understanding*, in order to be susceptible of the Impressions of Truth: *Freedom*, that it might receive or  
not



not receive it at pleasure. Truth once received produces the *True*: Truth being rejected, the *False* takes its place. Hence it is easy to conclude, that the *True* and the *False* must have been occasioned by the free Will of an intelligent Being, according to the Choice it was pleased to make.

*Crito.* Some would here ask you, what that intelligent Being is; whether an Angel or a Man.

*Erastus.* I should say; it must certainly be he who deviated from his original Uprightness: If the Querist admitted the Testimony of Scripture, he would not suppose it an Angel. I know it is not fashionable to take the *Mosaical* Account of the Temptation too literally; but, without disputing on the Letter, we might observe the Design of that Historian; the Tendency of which is to shew us the *False*, at that time set in opposition to the *True*, and Man placed between them to determine his Choice of one or the other by his own free Will. The Event gives us to understand that he chose the *False*; or rather was deceived by taking the *False* for the *True*.

Is there any necessity of going so far back, to find the Reality of this History? Might it not be call'd, as to the Substance, the History of all Ages. Let Men dispute as long as they please concerning the Fact and the Circumstances of that Event; is it not sufficient, that what passes in our days, is a Repetition, or a speaking Picture of it?

Is it not incontestable, that Man is still placed between the *True* and the *False*; and doth not the Event every day prove that his strongest Inclinations draw him to the latter; and that his Will carries him to it?

However, he never determines on the *False*, as such; but as it wears the appearance of the *True*, or as he gives it the Colour of the *True*.

*Philos.* *Erastus* has painted us several things with one single Stroke. This Point of View might be sufficient for unravelling innumerable Difficulties.

*Erastus.* What we have said of the *False*, as it shews itself without by Disguise, is no more than a Consequence

of the *False*, which Man has allow'd free Entrance into himself. But whence comes it that he gives so great a preference to the *False*, since he is so fond of the Image and Appearance of the *True*? It is because the Image or Appearance amuses him agreeably, without producing any real Reformation in him; even without letting him see such a Reformation is necessary.

Whereas the Reality of the *True*, or simple Truth, which is its Origin, endeavours this Reformation in Man, by acting first on the Sentiment, or Conscience.

This Sentiment is painful, as it undeceives Man of the favourable Opinion he had entertain'd of himself, and attacks him in the tenderest Part, where he cannot suffer any thing should make an Attempt on him. I speak here of the Opinion of a pretended Uprightness or Honesty, of which this Sentiment disabuses him; and of which he is not willing to be disabused.

*Philo.* I find Proofs within my self of all *Erastus* has been saying. And I remember, by the Acknowledgments which *Crito* has more than once made, that his Case must be the same with mine.

*Crito.* Exactly; I long'd to tell you so, *Philo*; but you would not hear me.

*Philo.* I heard you often enough, *Crito*, in spite of my self; but in reality, I was not willing to hear you. I thereby see the Truth of what *Erastus* has often told us; that every thing in Man must begin with the Will: that, according to the Determination of that Faculty for the *True* or the *False*, it may conduct Man to what is most divine, or most diabolical.

*Erastus.* From which let us conclude, that in regard to every Man in particular, the Will is the Origin of the *True* or the *False*; as it allows the one or the other free Entrance. But I believe we forget ourselves, and that it is later than we imagine.

*Philo.* I cannot prevail with my self to quit either *Erastus* or the Walk. Shall we make a bargain for accommodating the whole Matter. Come and sup with me, and after that we will return, and indulge our *Reveries* here by Star-light.

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* I take you at your Word, *Philo*; and am persuaded *Crito* will join me.

*Crito.* I know my own Interest too well to refuse the Proposal; and *Philo* would have been caught, had I not invited me in good earnest.

## DIALOGUE XVI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS;

*Walking after Supper.*

*Philo.* I Know not, *Erastus*, whether your Taste agrees with mine or not; but methinks this is the best time for Walking.

*Erastus.* At least it is most proper for *Reveries*; every thing seems to invite to them, even the Croaking of the Frogs, not to mention the murmuring Brooks. But the Business of *Reveries* excepted, it must be own'd that the View of the Day is quite another thing: it has somewhat gay and lovely, to which all Animals give a welcome. I speak of such as appear in the Day, and particularly of Birds; among which, Man ought always to be plac'd in the first Rank.

*Crito.* I understand you, *Erastus*; you mean that Man ought to be, in all Senses, a Day-bird.

*Erastus.* Right; and I add that if Man loves the Day, it is rather that which he shares with those little Animals, than the Day which is proper to him in the Quality of Man. In that respect, he avoids the Light; and may be called a Night-bird. Not that he was formed for that Character, but because he has made a free Choice of it.

*Philo.* Perhaps those who have the greatest aversion to the Light, are such as imagine themselves most enlighten'd, and most capable of an exact Discernment of Objects.

*Erastus.* Most certainly, *Philo*. This comes not from their being in absolute Ignorance, which being nothing, may perhaps be compared to mere Darkness,

but from their being enlighten'd with a false or borrow'd Light, to which they give the Name of Truth, and which satisfies them so far, as to leave them nothing to desire or see beyond it.

*Crito.* I am thinking of what you lately said, *Erastus*, that *the Will is in every Man the Origin of the True and the False*. I imagine it might be objected, that the Discernment of the *True* and the *False* belongs to the Understanding, rather than to the Will; and that it is the Business of the Eye to discern Objects, before the Will makes its Choice.

*Erastus.* It is, I own, the Business of the Eye to discern Objects; but can the Eye open and fix on such or such an Object, without the Consent of the Will, even when the Light actually shines? The Will, as the sovereign Faculty in Man, has it always in its power to avoid it, more or less. It uses innumerable Shifts to screen itself from the Light more or less.

*Philo.* I never observ'd, *Erastus*, the Power, which the Will has over the whole Man, and even over the Understanding, which seems independent of it. I understand the Case here is the same as in regard to the Eye, which is commanded by the Will to open or shut, partly or entirely, to look on one side of certain Objects, when it is not willing to see them entirely, and . . .

*Erastus.* Here the winking with the Eye, mention'd in the Gospel, takes place. In proportion as the Eye opens and shuts on a sudden, it sees and does not see; or rather it has so imperfect a Glimpse of all things, that it takes them rather for what they are not, than for what they are.

Judge now what weight is to be allow'd to the Judgment that may hence be formed; and whether by this way of seeing, it be possible to set a right Value on things.

*Crito.* This Principle of the Will's Power over the Understanding is, perhaps, one of the most incontestable, and, at the same time, the least known.

*Erastus.* The *False*, that reigns in the World, may be consider'd either as *speculative*, or *practical*. The Will is the Origin of both.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* I could never have comprehended how the *Speculative False*, or the *False* in point of Opinion could proceed from the Will, without the Principle established by *Eraſtus*. I now find it easy to explain; and am much mistaken if another Objection, which several will, no doubt, start against the Letters on Conscience, is not as easily solved by the same Principle.

*Eraſtus.* Perhaps, I guess at that Objection. It is about placing Conscience above Reasoning.

*Crito.* It is so, *Eraſtus*. I thought you would be charged with abolishing all use of Reasoning, or of right Reason; for you know one is confounded with the other.

*Eraſtus.* There certainly is a wide difference between *Reasoning and right Reason*. For want of being acquainted with this Distinction, Men have fought with their own Shadows, and multiplied Disputes about Words without end.

*Crito.* Not to mention the differences among Divines on this Article, you know the Mystics are accused of forbidding all Use of Reason, and representing it as a very pernicious Thing.

*Eraſtus.* The Mystics, or rather the Apprentices in that System, who have undertaken to ape the true Mystics, have, perhaps, spoken against Reason, and shelter'd themselves under their Authority, without understanding their Doctrine. It is diverting to observe how these Men blunder and dash one against another. A Word, which they look on as sacred, cannot be attack'd, but they immediately take fire, and are resolved to defend it to the last. Another Word, which they consider as out-lawed, because it has been banished by some one of their Saints, puts them out of all patience; they can bear it no more, than if it came out of the bottomless Pit.

By accustoming themselves to quarrel about *Words*, Men come to substitute them in the place of the *Ideas* of Things. With many People, Words are like what Bank Bills once were in *France*. Men were content to be paid with Paper, and paid others in the same man-

ner. There is some reason to believe the Credit of Words will fall as much as that of Paper, among those who love Reality.

*Crito.* The Comparison is pleasant. But then it should not be forgot, that every one loves Reality in Gold and Silver ; but very few give themselves any concern for the Reality of Truth. In this respect, Men are not displeased at being paid with Words ; whereas it was Force only that established the Credit of Paper.

*Philo.* Since *Words*, destitute of Ideas, are not to pass current among us, *Erastus*, you are to give us an Idea of the difference which you make between Reasoning and right Reason.

*Erastus.* Before we shew the difference between two Things, we ought to form a distinct Idea of each. I have a right therefore, *Philo*, to ask you what you understand by *right Reason* ; for as the Ideas fixed to Words are arbitrary, the same Words may be employ'd for signifying different Things ; and it is impossible to be understood, unless we first agree on the Sense we wou'd give to each Word.

After all, nothing is so childish as to dispute about the Sense of Words ; as they are made only for understanding one another, what doth it signify what Sense we fix to them, provided we thereby explain ourselves the better. Pray, tell me then, what you mean by *right Reason*.

*Philo.* What do I mean by it ? I understand by it a Reason, which forms a sound Judgment of every Thing, is capable of distinguishing the *True* from the *False*, the *Just* from the *Unjust*. But I perceive this is saying nothing. The Term *right Reason* alone, implies more than all these synonymous Words put together.

*Erastus.* You are not satisfied with your own Definition, *Philo* ; you are a little difficult. I know some, who wou'd be highly delighted with it, and be very much pleas'd with themselves for making such a one. However, it must be granted that it may be placed in the same Rank with that which says Black is not White.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* I am very sensible of it, *Erastus*; and was very glad to let you also see that I was not satisfied with it. For this time, I throw back the Ball to you, that I may not amuse you all Night with Definitions that say nothing.

*Erastus.* Must a *Reverend* once more tell his *Reveries* about Reason to Philosophers, to Men, who have spent their whole Lives in enquiring into the *Reason* of Things?

But what is the meaning of the Term *Reason*? Is it a Thing that knows, or one that ought to be known? Most certainly the latter, because inanimate Things have not a Reason that knows, but a Reason which may be known; that is, their Cause, their End and their Use. The Term *Reason* is synonymous to these; which when taken right, comes up to the Idea we have form'd of the *True*. Is not the Term *Reason*, on some other Occasions, taken in the same Sense as the *True*, the *Just*, and the *Equitable*, the Cause, or the Motive, &c. and not for the understanding of each in particular? By confounding Things of different Natures, the Term *Reason* is become so modish, that we use it on all Occasions, and every one pretends to have Reason on his side.

*Philo.* You shew me what I never observ'd before, *Erastus*; Reason, which ought to know, is one Thing; and Reason which ought to be known is another. Our Language must be very barren, if it has but one Word to express two Things so different.

*Erastus.* When we propose to speak exactly, and come to precise Ideas, it will be no hard matter to avoid Ambiguity, by employing the word *Understanding* to express Reason which ought to know, or the Reason of each Man in particular; and leaving the word *Reason* in general to signify what ought to be known, what is reasonable, just, true, equitable, &c.

*Crito.* You put me in mind, *Erastus*, that the Term *Reason* is applied on a thousand Occasions, where that of *Understanding* cannot be admitted; as when we speak of the Reason, we have for doing or not doing a

thing: when we maintain that we have Reason on our side; and that nothing is more reasonable than to act in such or such a manner. It is plain that by the Word *Reason*, we here mean something Universal, to which every one has a Right, and which belongs to no Man in particular.

*Eraſtus.* When we ſay, we muſt conſult Reason, right Reason, have we an Idea of ſomething particular, or univerſal?

*Crito.* Of ſomething univerſal, without doubt; for ſuch an Expreſſion doth not imply that we muſt conſult the Reason of Mr. Such-a-one, or Mr. Such-a-one. By right Reason we here underſtand ſomething general, which every Man is in a Condition of knowing and conſulting himſelf, without being under a neceſſity of paſſing through the Canal of others.

*Eraſtus.* In the next place, I aſk; is right Reason *one*, or *many*?

*Crito.* *One*, undoubtedly, as it is univerſal. I have not ſo ſoon forgot my Catechiſm, which tells me that what is *univerſal* is *one*, &c.

*Eraſtus.* Very well answered. Here is a Scholar who will make ſome progreſs: He has a good Memory.

*Philo.* He, perhaps, imagines he ſhall engroſs that Character to himſelf. I remember it as well as he; and if our Profeſſor will examine me, he ſhall ſee it.

*Eraſtus.* Well, Sir; is right Reason invariably right; or is it ſometimes falſe?

*Philo.* If it cou'd be falſe, it wou'd ceaſe to be right Reason; as I have learnt in my Catechiſm, that *a Rule wou'd ceaſe to be a Rule, if it cea'd to be right.*

*Eraſtus.* Very pertinently replied. Tell me, *Crito*; is it not evident then that right Reason is *one*, univerſal, and invariably right?

*Crito.* Yes.

*Eraſtus.* My firſt Scholar has given a judicious Answer. I wou'd know of the ſecond, whether it doth not thence follow, that the whole Doctrin of the Catechiſm relating to the invariable, right, only, univerſal



sal Rule, is applicable to what we have called right Reason.

*Philo.* Without doubt.

*Crito.* Very learnedly replied. Here now are Scholars, who might have a Title to the Prize in *Reveries*, on the first Promotion.

*Crito.* Mr. Professor, perhaps, thinks he has to do with Scholars, docil enough to answer with *yes's*, and *without doubts*; but I have a difficulty to propose to him, which, perhaps, he will not solve so easily.

*Erastus.* That difficulty will, perhaps, be started in the Character of *Crito*, not in the quality of a Scholar.

*Crito.* It is this, *Erastus*. You here apply to right Reason, all you before applied to Conscience. Do you confound them together; or suppose Conscience and right Reason one and the same thing?

*Erastus.* I guess'd you was going to object in the Character of *Crito*. In order to explain so great a difficulty, he must answer me once more in quality of a Scholar. I ask then; is the Language of Conscience invariably that of Truth? Are the Orders, which it pronounces, sometimes true, and sometimes false?

*Crito.* Invariably true.

*Erastus.* Can the Language of right Reason be sometimes true and sometimes false? Or, is it invariably conformable to that of Truth?

*Crito.* It is invariably right, or true, like that of Conscience.

*Erastus.* Can you tell me, what is the Origin of the True?

*Crito.* Truth, as it is simple.

*Erastus.* Are there two simple Truths, or only one?

*Crito.* Only one.

*Erastus.* The Language of Conscience, therefore, and that of right Reason, have but one and the same Origin.

*Crito.* I grant it, *Erastus*, both in quality of *Crito*, and that of Scholar. But still, methinks, there should be some distinction between right Reason and Conscience,

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* That may very well be, *Crito*; and were it not time to sleep, rather than indulge our *Reveries*, we might pursue that Question. But I am so drowsy at present, that should I pretend to talk, I shall run the risk of telling you nothing but Dreams; and I should not be very well pleased with acquiring the Title of Master Dreamer, beside that of Professor of *Reveries*, with which you have dignified me.

*Crito.* How do you know, *Erastus*, but you may have a Dream to-night, that may confer that Title on you?

*Erastus.* If it happens so, *Crito*, I will place it to your account.

*Philo.* In the mean time, let us go, and try to sleep, and we shall see to-morrow which of us three has had the finest Dream. He shall be stiled, Master-Dreamer, or, to speak more honourably, Professor in the Art of Dreaming.

## DIALOGUE XVII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito* to *Erastus.* GOOD-morrow, Sir. Is there no Dream on the Carpet to-day?

*Erastus.* If you have any to produce, I am ready to hear it.

*Crito.* *Philo* is furnished, no doubt.

*Philo.* He imagines he has guess'd it. I assure you, however, I shall produce no Dream; for if I had one last Night, I have quite forgot it; and I think that a sufficient Excuse for not repeating it.

*Erastus.* Perhaps, *Philo*, that Excuse may not always hold good; you may recollect it, when you least think of it.

*Crito.* However, we have a Magician in our Company, who can give us an exact Account of it. In the mean time, let us stick to our *Reveries*, *Erastus* has engaged his Word for one more.

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* You are mercileſs Officers; I find there is no getting out of your hands, without paying down ready Money. But you will be ſurprized if I ſhould give you Fables inſtead of *Reveries*.

*Crito.* No matter, ſo you do but pay.

[*Here Erastus pulls an old Man ſtitcht out of his Pocket. opens it and reads.*]

“ A certain *Necromancer* has left us the following Relation in his Memoirs.

“ Between *Arabia Petrea*, and the Northern Extremity of the *Perſian* Gulf, lies a ſubterraneous Country of vaſt Extent, which is call'd the *Catacombs*.

“ The Inhabitants of that Place are born with very weak Eyes, and are very oddly form'd in other reſpects. The Obſcurity of the Country ſuits them in all Regards. They cannot bear the Light, without feeling the moſt violent Pain. We are told, however, that the Sun has in that Country a different Property from what it has in ours; that it inſenſibly cures all Indiſpoſitions of the Eye: that thoſe who have Courage enough to expoſe themſelves to its heat, and bear the Pain it cauſes at firſt, accuſtom themſelves to it by degrees, and in time come to have no Apprehenſion from it.

“ We are likewiſe told that thoſe, whom the Light has penetrated moſt direſtly, and thus cured moſt perfectly, love it ſo as to be unable to live without it.

“ This Country, though its Darkneſs differs but little from our Night, is not entirely inacceſſible to ſome Rays of the Sun. The Inhabitants can allow it Entrance more or leſs as they pleaſe by little Wickets, which it is in their power to open or ſhut. Theſe Wickets are placed at Openings made in the Rock, for allowing a Paſſage for the Light.

“ Beſide the Inlets, which the Light may have through theſe Wickets, there are here and there little *Paths*, through which the Light makes its way by ſeveral Windings. Theſe Paths are a ſort of  
“ Turn-

“ Turnings, which always run upwards, and are full  
 “ of Stones, each of them serving as a Step.

“ As the People go up, the Light grows stronger  
 “ and less indirect; and they begin to feel something  
 “ of the Sun’s Heat, in proportion as they are enlighten’d by it.

“ These Paths, which extend several Leagues, terminate below in the dark Country, or the Kingdom  
 “ of the *Catacombs*; and above issue into the light  
 “ Country in a vast Plain.

“ The Inhabitants of the dark Country can, by  
 “ means of their Paths, hold some Communication  
 “ with those of the light Country: they may even be  
 “ led to it, if they please; as the Inhabitants of the  
 “ light Country, may in their turn, go down into the  
 “ dark Country.

“ It appears from the Memoirs, left us by Historians, that those different People have but little Inclination to visit one another: that most of them  
 “ have a very great Aversion to it, which they cannot  
 “ prevail with themselves to overcome.

“ This Aversion may be accounted for in the following manner. To begin with those of the gloomy  
 “ Regions; it is easy to conceive that the Pain, they  
 “ feel from the Light, is one of the chief Causes of it.  
 “ Besides, they are born in that Country, they find there  
 “ not only all Necessaries of Life, but likewise all that  
 “ can render it agreeable. The Darknefs is so far  
 “ from being a Grievance, that it is even pleasant to  
 “ them. They have the Secret of making Lamps, the  
 “ Light of which doth not affect their Eyes like that  
 “ of the Sun. By that Light they discern Objects, and  
 “ make several Works.

“ These People are very laborious; and abound in  
 “ Manufactures of all sorts, proportion’d to the Wants  
 “ of the Inhabitants. Art supplies them with what  
 “ Nature has not afforded.

“ As their Sight is extremely weak, most of their Manufactures are employ’d for relieving them in that  
 “ point. This Relief consists in an almost infinite Variety of *Glasses* of all sorts. These *Glasses* are so  
 “ art-

“ artfully made, that they do not appear like  
“ those made in *Europe*. Some of them are design’d  
“ for magnifying Objects; others for Telescopes.  
“ They have Glasses well colour’d, which communi-  
“ cate the same Colours to the Object: others are pro-  
“ per for embellishing, and hiding, or at least extenu-  
“ ating all Deformities.

“ Beside these different Qualities, they have one which  
“ is peculiar to them; they may serve as Looking-  
“ glasses. Thus it is easy for a Man, who holds them,  
“ to see himself in what Light he pleases, and give  
“ himself embellishing Colours. The worst is, that  
“ others, who are Masters of the same Secret, often  
“ strip him of those borrow’d Colours, and expose his  
“ Natural Ugliness to View.

“ As to the Inhabitants of the light Country, it is  
“ not surprizing that they cannot prevail with them-  
“ selves to go down into the gloomy Regions. They  
“ have suffer’d too much in leaving them. After ha-  
“ ving endur’d, in long and troublesome Roads, all  
“ the Pain the Sun can give to weak Eyes, the Light  
“ is grown familiar to them, and they are as well  
“ pleas’d with it as if it was their own Element. By  
“ the same Light, they, at one Glance, discern both  
“ Persons and Things. They have no farther Occa-  
“ sion for Glasses; which now wou’d even hinder them  
“ from seeing, or, at least, from viewing Objects as  
“ they are; and they are no longer in the humour of  
“ seeing them disguised. They have likewise lost the  
“ Inclination to borrowing Colours for giving them  
“ Beauty in their own Eyes, or those of others. The  
“ Light, which by a Quality peculiar to that Coun-  
“ try, serves them as a Mirrour, gives them a distinct  
“ View of their remaining Defects: they are willing  
“ to see their own Imperfections, and have them visi-  
“ ble to others.

“ After this Account, are we to be surprized that the  
“ gloomy Country, and the manner of living there, are  
“ become insupportable to them? Not to mention the  
“ stifling Air of that Country; an Air that nothing  
“ puri-

“ purifies; and which must be infected by Exha-  
 “ lations from the Bodies pent up in it. This Air,  
 “ compar’d to that breath’d by the Inhabitants of the  
 “ light Country, wou’d pass rather for a Fog that hin-  
 “ ders Respiration, than an Air proper to promote it.

“ We read in the Memoirs of . . . . . that a  
 “ young *African*, who was conducted by a *Genius* to  
 “ view the several Curiosities of the World, travell’d  
 “ into these two Countries. I shall here give you his  
 “ own Account of them both. I pass by his Descrip-  
 “ tion of the Situation of the Country, to come to the  
 “ Historical Part.

“ The *Genius*, who instructed me, says he, having  
 “ shewn me the different Situation of these two King-  
 “ doms, and the Passages from one to the other, put  
 “ me on observing the different Manners of the Inhabi-  
 “ tants, and gave me some Pieces of History concerning  
 “ them, which he tells me are worthy of Credit.

“ These two People, said he, have one common  
 “ Origin. It is related, that they were all at first pla-  
 “ ced in the Country of Light, and were well-treated  
 “ by the King of that Country; but that an Accident  
 “ befalling them which prejudiced their Eyes, and at  
 “ the same time made them deformed in other respects,  
 “ obliged them to fly from the Light, and seek a Re-  
 “ treat in the *Catacombs*: that, having found an *Afy-*  
 “ *lum* suitable to their Indisposition, they settled there,  
 “ and set up the Manufactures we now see among  
 “ them.

“ I then ask’d my *Genius*, whence came those Men  
 “ who at present inhabit the Country of Light?

“ They quitted the *Catacombs*, said he, at the re-  
 “ peated Invitations of the King of Light. We  
 “ are told that the same Prince, mov’d with Com-  
 “ passion for those distemper’d People, continu’d to  
 “ press their Return: that, for that purpose, he di-  
 “ rected the making of those Paths, which insensibly  
 “ lead from one Country to the other: that he sent  
 “ them repeated Messages, with Letters Patent, assu-  
 “ ring them the Light, they so much dreaded, was the  
 “ only

“ only Remedy that could cure them: He mention’d  
“ the Persons sent to them as so many Witness’s of  
“ the Truth of what he said. Those Messengers being  
“ taken from among them, had been courageous e-  
“ nough to expose themselves to the Heat of the Sun,  
“ and thus came in time not to fear it.

“ History tells us, those Messengers were receiv’d  
“ more or less favourably, according to the different  
“ Periods of Time, in which they appear’d: That  
“ great Numbers of them were ill treated and even  
“ persecuted, not as Messengers from the King, but as  
“ Impostors: that, however, the Letters Patent were  
“ register’d in the Public Annals: that after the Death  
“ of those Messengers, both they and the Letters were  
“ held in great Veneration: that they were restor’d to  
“ the Title of the King’s Messengers, and the Letters  
“ to that of Royal Patents.

“ Beside all this, as these Letters came from the  
“ Country of Light, and were only so many Evidences  
“ in its favour, they insensibly receiv’d the Appella-  
“ tion of *Light*. Hence the Name of *Light* is be come  
“ familiar to the Inhabitants of the gloomy Regions.  
“ As the Name of the King of Light has in all times  
“ been honour’d by them, as still professing themselves  
“ his Subjects; every one was desirous of being fur-  
“ nished with the Letters of Light: every one valued  
“ himself on asserting their Excellency; their Name  
“ and that of the King ceased from all Parts.

“ It is very remarkable that the same Prince, ha-  
“ ving, from time to time, sent Messengers with  
“ such Letters, they were all ill treated. But what is  
“ still more surprizing is, the King’s Son, appearing  
“ to confirm the Testimony of his Messengers, was  
“ taken for the greatest Impostor of all, and put to  
“ Death as such.

“ Seiz’d with Astonishment at an Event so incredible,  
“ I ask’d my *Genius*, whether the King’s Son was  
“ provided with such Letters Patent, as were proper to  
“ make him known to his Subjects.

“ He

“ He was, replied he, provided with most authentic Testimonies, beside the Evidences given of him in the other Letters Patent. Were not those former Letters consulted? Said I. They were, answer’d my *Genius* ; and it was by those very Letters that they thought themselves authorized to reject him.

“ Some difference they found between the former Letters, and those brought by the King’s Son, was sufficient for making them not know him. This, at least, was their Pretence ; but at the bottom, it was their Aversion to the Light, for which the Prince had open’d a Passage more than all the former Messengers had done. Besides, the Testimony which he gave, engaged great Numbers of the Inhabitants to walk in the narrow Paths : The Credit of *Glasses* began to decline : Several Persons ventured to open the little Wickets, in order to accustom themselves to the Impressions of the Light, and view Objects by it.

“ The Wickets being a little open’d let too strong a Light into the Country. Beside what their Eyes suffered from it, they discover’d Deformities, which till then had been hid : A Remedy must be found for an Evil that might be attended with such pernicious Consequences, and convert the Kingdom of the *Catacombs* into a Desert. This was prudently perform’d by cutting off not only the Prince himself, but all his Subjects, who came after him, to bear Testimony of him.

“ Now begins a new Epocha. Soon after the Prince’s Death, he was acknowledged as the King’s Son : the Act of those who had put him to death, was look’d on with Horror : His History was recorded, as also that of his Servants. and the Testimonies they had born of him : Their Writings were received as even more authentic, than those of the former Messengers.

“ Here, I asked my *Genius*, whether these last Testimonies given to Light had engaged any number of the Inhabitants to walk in the narrow Paths.

“ Some.



“ Some, replied he, ran to them with eagerness immediately after the Prince’s Death ; but means were soon found for barricading the Avenues. At first, People were intimidated by Cruelties ; but, it being observed that these only enhanced the Desire of making their way to the Country of Light, a milder Method was employ’d, which succeeded better in keeping Men within the Kingdom of the *Catacombs*. This Method consisted in proving to them that the Country where they lived, was part of the Kingdom of Light ; and that they really enjoy’d it, was evident from their being in possession of the *Letters* of Light, and their being proposed to all the Inhabitants, as the only Rule of their Conduct. In order to facilitate the Reception of them, and relieve the Weakness of their Sight, new *Glasses* were invented, more nicely made than the former ; several sorts of them were delivered to each Man. By the Assistance of these Glasses, new Discoveries were every day made in the Letters or Book of Light. Never was People more enlighten’d.

“ But there is an Inconveniency remaining. As the same Glasses serve to colour Objects, and give them several Forms, according as each Man managed them, the Contrarieties found in the Book of Light, were as numerous as the Glasses made for shewing Contrarieties. One saw Black, where another saw White. Some perceived Mountains, where others found only some Grains of Sand ; in short, every one saw in them the Road he was pleased to chuse, as clear as the Sun at Noon-day. Thus a Division has been introduced between the Inhabitants of the same Kingdom, between those who agree in receiving the same Book for Light, and call themselves Children of Light. From that time they have been separated and distinguished one from the other by different Liveries, and different Surnames ; but not one of the Parties would quit the Title of Partisan of Light. At the same time they

“ charged one another reciprocally with being Sectaries of the Kingdom of Darkneſs.

“ As the Followers of each Party ſaw Objects through Glaſſes made by thoſe of his own, every one accuſed the Glaſſes made elſewhere of diſfiguring Objects, and preſenting Black for White. Every one was ready to lend his Neighbour the Glaſſes he uſed, as the only true ones, which ſhew things as they are.

“ I then enquired of my *Genius* how long this Conteſt had been depending. Above ſixteen hundred Years, ſaid he, in relation to the Subſtance and Eſſence. For the Diviſion was not ſo evident, at firſt; but the matter may be traced ſtill higher, in the firſt Regard.

“ I aſked whether any one is accuſed of being the Author of this Diviſion. Some, replied he, attribute it to the Policy of the Prince of the *Catacombs*, who is, they ſay, at the Bottom of this Affair, though he does not appear in it. It is thought his Deſign was by this means to detain his Subjects in his Kingdom; and, by amuſing them with Diſputes on the Book of Light, make them give over all Thoughts of thoſe narrow Paths, which lead to the Kingdom of Light. The ſame Prince is ſuſpected of having a conſiderable hand in the ſudden Diſtemper with which the firſt Inhabitants of the Country of Light were ſeized, and of having brought them under his Dominion by his Stratagems. At leaſt this is related as a Fact in the Book which bears teſtimony of the Light.

“ But whatever becomes of this Queſtion, the Policy aſcribed to that Prince, produced its intended Effect. Each Party, pretending to be Partifans of Light, thought no more of quitting the Country: Each of them thought itſelf well ſituated; and, if any entertain'd an Idea of a more luminous Country, they immediately ſaid within themſelves, that this Light was reſerved only for another Life: that it was a raſh Attempt to pretend to make their way to it, while they ſojourn'd in this Body; in a Body ſo little diſpoſed to admit of Light: that they could

“ not face it without feeling great Pain: that without  
“ that Light, the Kingdom of the *Catacombs* afforded  
“ enough; and that they might, in all respects, remain  
“ there to advantage, be accommodated with all sorts  
“ of Conveniencies; after which, when they left these  
“ Bodies, they should be received into the Kingdom of  
“ Light.

“ In this the most opposite Parties generally agree.  
“ The Contest, however, still subsists, the Breach  
“ grows wider; and it is affirm'd that, beside the Di-  
“ vision, which reigns between the several Parties,  
“ each Party is as much divided within itself.

“ Here I asked my *Genius*, whether, among all the  
“ Inhabitants of this Kingdom, there were none who  
“ endeavour'd a Re-union. Those only, said he, who  
“ dare undertake to tread in the narrow Paths which  
“ lead to the Country of Light. How so, said I?  
“ Doth that remove the Differences between the Par-  
“ ties? You shall know, replied he, how this comes  
“ to pass. Whatever Distance there is from one Path  
“ to another at first, they come nearer together as the  
“ Travellers advance. It is observable, that several of  
“ those Paths meet, and become one. Thus Men are  
“ reunited, who, at their first setting out, were at a  
“ great distance one from another.

“ What farther contributes to reunite them, added  
“ he, is, that in proportion as they approach the  
“ Light, and their Eyes become able to bear it, they  
“ are all illuminated by the same Light. The Di-  
“ versity of Lights, which occasions Division in the  
“ Kingdom of the *Catacombs*, having no place here,  
“ all Subjects of Dispute cease. As they see Objects by  
“ the same Light, they no longer differ in the Judg-  
“ ment they form of them.

“ After all, we are told that some Variety in the  
“ manner of beholding things doth not divide them.  
“ Their chief concern is to proceed and walk toward  
“ the Light, rather than take notice of the Objects,  
“ they meet in their way.

“ But, said I, what is it that makes this Road so difficult? And why is it trod by so few? Some Courage is required for that, replied my *Genius* ; on one hand, to place one’s self above all that may be thought or said by the Inhabitants of the Country ; in whose Opinion those Roads are useless, and even dangerous: on the other, to bear all the Pain, that weak Eyes may feel from the Impressions of Light ; not to mention the Length and Difficulties of the Journey.

“ I then asked, whether the Difficulties were always the same in this Road ; and whether some had more to struggle with than others. The Difficulties, said he, vary *ad infinitum*, according to the Disposition, Age and Courage of the Persons.

“ The first Step, which is commonly the most difficult, gives some infinitely more Pain than others. I desired to know the Reason of this ; and who suffer’d most on this Occasion. Those, said he, whose Indisposition of Eyes is grown inveterate by Age, and who for that Reason must feel more acute Pain from the Light. Another thing that renders this first Step so difficult to them, is, that they till then thought themselves in the Mansions of Light : they had not observed the Indisposition of their Eyes in regard to it ; and they must be convinced of that, before they resolve on this first Step. Great Numbers stop here, not being able even to permit themselves to be undeceived in that Point.

“ Young People have less Difficulty in making this first Step, as their Indisposition in regard to the Light is less strong, and as they did not imagine themselves so clear-sighted as the former. Speaking in general, continued he, some Exceptions are to be made. Each Age has Obstacles to surmount, which are peculiar to it ; and in every Age the Decision is made by the Will. However, all things consider’d, young People have the Advantage ; and among them, such as have Courage, and presume least on their being enlighten’d,

“ How

“ How happens it, said I, that among People, who  
“ believe themselves in the Country of Light, some  
“ think of leaving it, and going in quest of another?

“ This commonly happens, answer'd my *Genius*,  
“ when on reading the Book, which bears testimony  
“ of the Light, some open the Wickets to give them-  
“ selves Light, and thus find that Light of a very dif-  
“ ferent kind from what shines in the Kingdom of the  
“ *Catacombs*: that the Book which bears the Title of  
“ Light, is written only to give testimony of it, and  
“ direct Men to the Country where it shines. The same  
“ Book points out the little Paths, as the Roads which  
“ others have taken to arrive there. Thus they are at  
“ full liberty to determine whether they will take  
“ that Road, or remain in the gloomy Regions. If  
“ they resolve on the latter, they are obliged to shut  
“ the Wickets, to avoid being hurt by the Rays,  
“ which their Eyes are not able to bear; for you must  
“ know that the Rays of Light, which pass through  
“ the Wickets, give much more pain than what shines  
“ in the little Paths.

“ But, replied I, is not the same Light the Source  
“ of both? Yes, said he; but, as it is more streighten'd  
“ by the Wickets than by those Paths, and darts on  
“ such as reside on the same Place, it strikes them so  
“ as to give them more Pain than is felt by those whom  
“ it enlightens in the Paths, and walk without settling  
“ any where.

“ I then enquired of my *Genius*, how they, who are  
“ unacquainted with the Book which bears testimony  
“ of the Light, could, without that Guide, find the  
“ Paths that lead to it.

“ The Rays, said he, which they receive at the  
“ Wickets, direct them to the small Paths; then they  
“ begin to have some experience of the Light; and  
“ understand that it comes from another Country.  
“ Whatever their Eyes suffer from it at first, they  
“ think it beautiful, and perceive, by a *Je ne sai quoi*,  
“ which is a Consequence of their Origin, that they  
“ were made for the Country, where it shines. This

“ Sentiment they have in common with all those, who  
 “ have not increased their Indisposition by the con-  
 “ tinued Use of the coloured Glasses. They then try  
 “ to find some Opening, through which they may  
 “ make their way to that Light. While they are  
 “ groping along, they discover the little Paths, and  
 “ attempt to tread in them; and from that moment  
 “ it is entirely in their own power to pursue their Jour-  
 “ ney. The same Light serving them as a Guide, and  
 “ continually encreasing, it is, I say, entirely in their  
 “ own power, if they will but bear the Fatigues which  
 “ are inseparable from such an Attempt.

“ Methinks, said I, those, of whom you spoke last,  
 “ more easily come to a Resolution of travelling to-  
 “ ward the Country of Light, than those in possession  
 “ of the Book, which bears testimony of it. May it  
 “ not thence be concluded, that the said Book is be-  
 “ come rather prejudicial than advantageous to them?

“ It becomes prejudicial to those only, replied he,  
 “ who pervert the Use of it; but is infinitely advan-  
 “ tageous to others. It serves them as a Testimony  
 “ through their whole Journey, by the Relation they  
 “ discover between their own Steps and the Tracks of  
 “ the Prince and his Messengers. It supports and en-  
 “ courages them under their Difficulties and Fatigues,  
 “ and lets them know the happy Lot reserved for the  
 “ end of their Journey.

“ Hence it appears that those, who are in possession  
 “ of this Book, have a considerable Advantage over  
 “ those, who never heard of it; they have, at least,  
 “ more Encouragement and Assistance, and may thus  
 “ unravel such Difficulties as prove inexplicable to o-  
 “ thers.

“ As for those, to whom this Book becomes preju-  
 “ dicial, they can blame none but themselves. This  
 “ Book directs them to the Light, and points out the  
 “ Way to it; shews them the Foot-steps of the Prince,  
 “ and invites them to join him. This is the Use of  
 “ a Testimony. Let us now see how it is perverted,  
 “ and made to serve contrary ends. Under pretence  
 “ of

“ of doing it more honour, Men divest it of the Title  
“ of a *Testimony*, and call it the *Light*. Hence it is  
“ concluded that the gloomy Kingdom is well en-  
“ lightened, that this *Light* is more than sufficient,  
“ and that it would be unnecessary to seek for any  
“ elsewhere.

“ Here I ask’d my *Genius*, whether the Prince of  
“ *Light* sends any fresh Messenger to reform this Ab-  
“ use ; or whether he gives himself no farther Con-  
“ cern for the Inhabitants of the gloomy Country.

“ It is thought, answer’d he, that he is still equally  
“ concern’d for them ; but it is added, that it would  
“ be unnecessary for him to send Messengers ; because  
“ the People are in possession of the Book which con-  
“ tains the *Testimony* of the old Messengers : and, as  
“ the Prince doth nothing usefess, it is concluded he  
“ will send no more.

“ On that foot, said I, if the Prince formed a dif-  
“ ferent Judgment of what may be useful or not so,  
“ and thought proper to send other Messengers, would  
“ they be treated as Impostors, merely because the  
“ Prince ought to do nothing usefess? Yes, replied  
“ he ; if not by all the Inhabitants, at least, by those  
“ who have already determin’d that the Prince will  
“ send none.

“ But, said I, would not the way of Examination  
“ take place in this Case with several of the Inhabitants ?  
“ Perhaps it might, answer’d he ; but there is reason  
“ to believe, that the different Glasses, through which  
“ great numbers would see them, would prevent their  
“ knowing them ; and that only such as would see  
“ with their own Eyes, and open the Wickets, in or-  
“ der to receive *Light*, would be in a condition of  
“ knowing them.

“ I then asked my *Genius*, what is the Lot of those  
“ who obstinately resolve to continue in the Kingdom  
“ of the *Catacombs*.

“ The most horrible that can be imagined, said he.  
“ After some days *Diversion*, allow’d them by the  
“ Prince, in order to amuse them, they are removed  
“ into

“ into another Country belonging to the same Prince,  
 “ where they feel the utmost Effects of his Vengeance.  
 “ But what torments them most, is that the Glasses and  
 “ false Mirrours being then of no farther use, they see  
 “ themselves, and are seen by others, as so many  
 “ Monsters. In a word, they see all that the Ob-  
 “ scurity of the gloomy Kingdom had hid from their  
 “ Eyes ; and their Bones are racked with acute Pains,  
 “ which the Numbness, occasion’d by the Moisture of  
 “ the said Country, had suspended ; beside all which,  
 “ their Eyes, which could not bear the Light, are here  
 “ obliged to suffer a devouring Fire. In short, to  
 “ compleat their Misery, they have only what they  
 “ themselves chose, and might have avoided.”

Here end the Memoirs of the *African*.

*Crito*. This is a Fable as valuable as *Reveries* ; we are content to be paid in such Coin, *Erastus*.

*Philo*. We accept of it as good Money ; but the Question will be, to which of us *Erastus* will lend this Manuscript.

*Erastus*. To end all Disputes, to neither of you. (*Here Erastus puts the Manuscript into his Pocket.*) It shall return to the Place from whence it came ; and if you will take my advice, we will go home.

## DIALOGUE XVIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Philo*. **I** Hope *Erastus* has brought the Manuscript with him. I wished him no Good last Night for refusing it me. I wanted to take a second View of several things.

*Erastus*. I thought you had been surfeited with Fables. What would the World say, should it be known that Philosophers, such as *Crito* and *Philo*, amuse themselves with reading or hearing Fables ?

*Crito*. You see, *Erastus*, that *Philo* is a little childish in that particular. And I own I have no less desire to see the *African's* Narrative. Would you believe that,



as much a Fable as it is, I find it resembles Truth in several respects.

*Erastus.* That is surprising.

*Philo.* You Philosophers can find Relations in things the most unlike.

*Erastus.* In reality, who would have thought of looking for Truth in the Memoirs of a *Necromancer*, or in the Narrative of an *African*? None but *Crito* could do that.

*Crito.* Without doubt. What if I should tell you, I find some relation between the colour'd Glasses, and false Reasonings or Sophisms?

*Erastus.* Wonderful Penetration! You shall accept of the Task of unfolding those Relations more at large.

*Crito.* I perceive you will want me for that; and I give you my word to do it. But first, *Erastus* must perform what he promised us the day before yesterday.

*Erastus.* What, I pray?

*Crito.* Have you forgot, *Erastus*, that after Mr. Professor had examined his Scholars, it was concluded that *right Reason and Conscience had but one and the same Origin*. Whereupon a Question was started, whether there is not some Difference between them. This Mr. Professor engaged to explain.

*Erastus.* Your Memory is better than mine, *Crito*. In my dealings with you, I must take care not to be too lavish in Promises. I see you are not inclined to abate any thing of your Right.

*Crito.* What you say, is truer than you imagine, *Erastus*; and that in other respects than these in question. I mean that, if Interest was at all concern'd in the Affair, you would find me much stiffer in my Demands.

*Erastus.* I easily take your Word for that, dear *Crito*.

*Philo.* Perhaps *Crito* would not have been displeas'd, had you been a little incredulous.

*Erastus.* He would have been in the wrong for saying it, if he did not desire to be believed. I take all my Friends say of their own Failings, literally; as I am willing they should take what I may say of mine in the same manner,

*Crito.*

*Crito.* I will not tell you that I am a little vexed at dropping that Word. I am now reduced to an Alternative, very mortifying to Self-love. I must of necessity pass in your Judgment either for a selfish Person, or a Dissembler. Which would you advise me to chuse?

*Eraſtus.* Is there any Choice to make, dear *Crito*, in regard to a thing that is or is not? Doth not the *True* subsist independent of Opinion?

*Crito.* I own that, *Eraſtus*; but is it not customary to enquire what is advantageous or disadvantageous, rather than what is just or true?

*Eraſtus.* You are in the right, *Crito*; I had forgot that Maxim so universally received in Practice, though generally disown'd in Speculation.

*Philo.* Methinks a Maxim ought to be admitted by the Understanding or Reason, before it is received by the Will.

*Eraſtus.* That is a great Question. It is evident from Experience, that the Will rather determines the Understanding, than is determined by it.

*Philo.* I remember we agreed on that Point the other day, when we were speaking of the Power, which the Will has over the whole Man, and over the Understanding in particular. But may it not be objected, that the Will doth not come to a Determination, 'till the Understanding has found the *True* or the *Just*?

*Eraſtus.* Be pleas'd to observe, *Philo*, that the Persuasion of the Understanding, concerning the *True* or the *Just*, influences the Will only in the *dernier Resort*; but that at first the Will secretly resolves on what it desires the Understanding should persuade. The former commands the latter, with an Authority which it even conceals from itself, to give it a View of the *True* and the *Just*, in what it judges most advantageous.

*Crito.* At that rate, I should think the Will may be compared to a Queen who should first secretly gain the Consent of her Parliament, for the Decision of some Cause, and afterwards order the same Cause to be pleaded before her and the whole Parliament, where a plurality of Voices is to determine either for Right or Equity;

Equity ; after which she should pronounce Sentence in favour of Equity.

*Erastus.* Might it not likewise happen that, from the Art used by the Council to embellish the Cause, the Queen may be persuaded she is directed by Equity alone in her Decision ? Hence it is easy to conclude that, when the Will has before-hand declared for what is agreeable to it, it finds innumerable Reasons for persuading itself of what it wishes.

*Philo.* Such reasons are not certainly what you have called *right Reason* ; for that being always *right*, cannot accommodate itself to, or agree with the *False* ; besides, those Reasons are *many*, whereas *Right Reason* is but *one*.

*Crito.* Here is a Scholar, who knows how to make use of his Catechism. For my part, I always forget my self and, like a troublesome Scholar, ask Mr. Professor to explain the Difference between *Conscience* and *right Reason*, since they both have the same Origin.

*Erastus to Crito.* Is the Light of the Sun *one* or *many* ?

*Crito.* One only.

*Erastus.* Very well. Though the Light is but *one*, is it not endow'd with several different Properties, according to the Subjects on which it acts ?

*Crito.* Yes.

*Erastus.* Among other Properties, has it not these two in particular ; that of making itself felt or perceived by Sense ; and that of making us perceive or discern an Infinity of Objects ?

*Crito.* Certainly.

*Erastus.* This is understanding things. But tell me ; is there not some difference between the bare and undoubted Sentiment which you have, for example, of its being Day at present ; and the determinate Action by which you open your Eyes to discern the Objects around you, by the help of the said Light ?

*Crito.* Without doubt.

*Erastus.* This is answering exactly. You grant then that a Cause, one and the same in its Origin, may vary  
in

in its Effects, or shew itself in different Manners.

*Crito.* That is certain.

*Erastus.* Very well. Do you not now think it would be easy, by this Emblem, to find out the Difference between Conscience and right Reason?

*Crito.* Yes.

*Erastus.* If simple Truth be the Origin of both, as we have proved, may we not compare the Effect it produces on the Conscience, to that simple and sudden Sentiment, by which we begin to experience what Light is?

*Crito.* I think so.

*Erastus.* And may we not also compare *right Reason* to the Day which the same Light diffuses on Objects, and to the simple Action of the Sight, by which it discerns or views them?

*Crito.* I think we may.

*Erastus.* This shews your Judgment. Now to my second Scholar. We have seen that *simple Truth*, which is but *one*, shews itself in Man two different ways; by which of them does it begin to make itself known?

*Philo.* It begins to make itself perceived or known in the Conscience.

*Erastus.* Very well. Why does it begin with Conscience, before right Reason? Is it not because the Light makes itself perceived, in a sudden and simple Manner, before it distinctly shews any Object?

*Philo.* That is the very Reason.

*Erastus.* Does not your Catechism say, \* *that simple Truth, as the right Rule, labours only to make Man upright?*

*Philo.* True.

*Erastus.* That, in order to make Man *upright*, it must begin with shewing the *False* within him?

*Philo.* Yes.

*Erastus.* And that it makes him perceive the *False* in his *Will*, before it shews him the *False* in his *Ideas*?

*Philo.* Exactly so.

\* See Letter 3d, from *Erastus* to *Crito*.

*Erastus.* Has it not likewise been said, that the Will ought to be corrected before the Ideas; because that Faculty is supreme in Man, and by it he may be led into the way of Truth, when it is *upright*; as he is strengthen'd by it in the way of Lying and Seduction, when it is *false*?

*Philo.* Yes.

*Erastus.* May not it thence be concluded, that *Man is incapable of discerning the True, or of consulting right Reason, if the Will is false.*

*Philo.* Certainly.

*Erastus.* And that it is only in proportion to the Uprightness of his Will, that his Ideas are rectified, or he is guided by right Reason in discerning the *True*?

*Philo.* Without doubt.

*Erastus.* This is sufficient for explaining the Section in our Catechism, which we undertook to consider to-day.

*Crito.* I do not repent of having been a little troublesome; Mr. Professor may expect I shall be so again, as occasion offers.

*Erastus.* Perhaps, you may not always find him in the humour of acting the Casuist; and the Scholar, with all his Importunity, may have nothing to advance. But let us talk no more at present of Professor and Scholar. I have kept my Word; it is *Crito's* Business to keep his. He ought to remember, he promised to explain the Relations he finds between the coloured Glasses and false Reasonings.

*Crito.* No doubt, without my Assistance you would not be able to discover them; or tell us, for example, that apparent or subtle Reasonings have the Property of making Objects appear bigger or less, according to each Man's particular Taste or Interest; that, by virtue of the same Secret, every one may see things in the Light, which best pleases him; give himself fine Colours, impose on the World; and in short, varnish over the *False* with the appearance of the *True*, and disguise the *True* in such a manner, that it cannot be known or distinguished.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* A Man must be very cunning, to find out such exact Relations.

*Crito.* I knew you wou'd admire the Justness of my Discernment. What if I should tell you, I find still more Relations with this Day's Catechism on *Conscience and right Reason*?

*Philo.* We shall be agreeably surpriz'd at the Discovery.

*Crito.* You are to know, then, that I find a Relation between the Openings, through which the Inhabitants of the gloomy Country may receive Light, and the Means which each Man may have of being enlightened by simple Truth : that the Rays of Light, which pass through the Wickets, might represent the first Traces of simple Truth on the Conscience ; that is, that Remorse and those Apprehensions, which shew a Man he is in the *False*, and at the same time invite him to take the opposite Road.

That the Light, which shines on those who walk in the little Paths, may signify that of *right Reason*, which continually increases, in proportion to the Progress made by the Will in Uprightness.

That the Liberty, allow'd the Inhabitants of the said Country to open, or shut the Wickets, expresses the Liberty given to every Man of hearing or admitting, more or less, the Reproofs and Invitations of Conscience, or shutting up the Avenues in order to exclude them.

That the more or less acute Pains, which the Eyes suffer from the Rays of Light, in proportion to the Indisposition of that Organ, may signify the Trouble and Confusion occasion'd by seeing ourselves in the *False*, after we have receiv'd the Applause of the World for being in Uprightness and *Truth*.

That this Pain is render'd more sensible by our reluctance in quitting the Road we had taken.

*Philo.* As you go on, *Crito*, you will leave us no room for guessing. I wou'd add, that the Glasses, or apparent Reasonings, come in very seasonably to the Assistance of those, who cannot prevail with themselves to take another Road.

They

They serve to justify their Choice, to persuade them they are already, where they should be ; in a word, that the Road, in which they are travelling, is that of Uprightness and Truth.

I here relate only one Circumstance of my Story ; and should certainly find several others in the same Fable, had I *Crito's* Penetration.

*Crito.* Though my Penetration in this Point is somewhat uncommon, I will not engross the whole Honour of it to myself. *Eraſtus* must help us to explain one Difficulty.

If the Inhabitants of the gloomy Kingdom represent those, who wilfully remain in the *False*, and in Illusion ; what are we to understand by the Inhabitants of the Country of Light ? What is that Country ? And what sort of People inhabit it ?

*Eraſtus.* It is easily comprehended, that the Country opposite to that of the *False*, and Illusion, must be that of Truth and Reality.

*Crito.* That is not my Question, dear *Eraſtus* ; I wou'd fain know whether the Inhabitants who reside there, are in the Body or out of the Body.

*Eraſtus.* To clear up that Point, we shall very much want the Assistance of the *Genius*, who conducted the *African* ; and I wish he was hang'd for not asking his Governour some Questions on that Subject. Were we to deal in Conjectures, I should say, I believe that Country, taken in a strict and rigorous Sense, to be the other World ; since the Idea of pure Light, which is bounded by nothing, represents something farther, than the most advantageous Dispositions which can be supposed in this Life, in regard to Truth.

However, to take it in a more extensive Sense, it may be said, that as soon as the Will enters into Uprightness, it quits the *False*, and begins to enter into the Element of the *True*, or of Truth. The Disposition of those, who wilfully remain in the *False*, is represented by the State of such as obstinately remain in the gloomy Country ; and that of those, who are making their way toward the Country of Light, represents the Disposition  
of

of such as getting at a distance from the *False*, every day give more room to the Passage of Light.

*Crito.* Hence it may be concluded, that such as walk in the small Paths, cease to be of the Number of the Inhabitants of the gloomy Country; but can they be rank'd with the Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Light?

*Erastus.* The Appellation of Candidates or Travelers toward the Country of Light, wou'd suit them better than that of Inhabitants; as the latter Title signifies something fix'd; which is not properly applied to Persons in motion. However, as those Paths are supposed very long, and the Persons are all along more or less illuminated, as they are at a greater or less Distance from the Country of Light; those who have travelled farthest in those Paths, and thus make nearer Approaches to the Light, may be termed Inhabitants of the Light, in comparison of such as make but small Progress in the said Paths: The Light, which shines on the latter being so indirect and weak, that it may rather be call'd a Glimmering than Light, in comparison of what shines on the former.

*Philo.* May not those, who are but just enter'd into the little Paths, and therefore are still near Neighbours to the gloomy Kingdom, be consider'd as belonging to it, in the same manner as we call those Inhabitants of Light, who are nearest to it?

*Erastus.* We must distinguish, dear *Philo*, in regard to the nearness of both to the opposite Country. Those who have just enter'd the little Paths, though very near the gloomy Kingdom, turn their backs on it, and remove farther and farther from it every step; whereas those, whom we have call'd Inhabitants of the luminous Country, instead of turning their back on it, direct all their steps toward it. Hence it is evident, that both travelling one and the same Road, though yet at a great distance one from the other, aim at the same end, and thus belong to the same Country.

*Philo.* The Fable seems to suppose, that those who walk in the little Paths, may through them go back into the Kingdom of the *Catacombs*. *Era-*



*Eraſtus.* They certainly may, by an Effect of their Liberty ; and as ſoon as they turn about, they will ceaſe to belong to the Kingdom of Light. But it appears, according to our *Necromancer's* Suppoſition, that thoſe who have proceeded far enough in their Journey to be pleaſed with the Light, as their own Element, wou'd be far from entertaining any Thought of returning. As to thoſe who are ſtill in the Neighbourhood of the gloomy Kingdom, they are ſtill in danger of feeling ſome Inclination of going back again. However, if their firſt Reſolution of leaving that Country was ſtrong, the Temptation to return has little or no Effect on them.

*Crito.* You will not gueſs, *Eraſtus*, what puzzles me in regard to the Paths which reach from one Country to the other : I wou'd fain find out *the fixed Point*, which divides one World from the other ; and this is what I cannot diſcover. I obſerve, that of all who die in the ſame Road, there are hardly two exactly in the ſame Place. Some quit this World in the middle of the way : others at their firſt ſetting out. Where then is the Term of this Life ?

*Philo.* Another Thing that confounds me, is, to know whether thoſe who die at the beginning of their Journey, are transported in a Moment to the Abodes of pure Light ; if ſo, they will enjoy a Privilege much beyond the others, who do not reach that Country, till they have ſuffer'd the Fatigue of a long and troubleſome Journey.

*Eraſtus.* You are both thus embarraſſed by confounding the End of the *Road* with the End of Life. They are very different ; ſeveral Perſons meeting with the End of Life, at the Beginning of the Road. It follows from thence, that they are to travel all the way in the other World, which they have not travell'd in this.

We muſt obſerve, after all, that the Separation of the Soul from the Body makes no Change in the Eſſence of the Journey ; it is only a Change of Circumſtances, in the Form, or in the Equipage of the Traveller ; juſt as if a Coach chanced to break down on the Road,

the Traveller will be obliged to make the rest of his Journey on foot.

*Crito.* He certainly wou'd be obliged to proceed on foot; because in a Journey of this kind, no second Conveniency can be found to supply the Place of the first. But were it possible to be translated in a Moment by a sort of Enchantment, into the Regions of pure Light, as *Philo* supposes, that wou'd be a shorter and much more agreeable Way. What think you, *Eraslus*?

*Eraslus.* It wou'd undoubtedly be shorter; but then the question is, whether the Eye, as yet indisposed, wou'd be able to bear that pure Light, without being insensibly accustomed to it; and whether the Impressions of so penetrating a Light wou'd not be more supportable to those who should be thus transported, than the most painful Fatigues of the Journey. We must consult the *African's* Genius on this Point.

*Philo.* I am thinking . . . . .

*Crito.* On what?

*Philo.* I remember *Eraslus* promised to lend us fourteen Letters in Manuscript, which treat of the State of the Dead.

*Crito.* Right. The good Man may, perhaps, imagine we will dispense with his Engagement.

*Eraslus.* I know you too well for that; but I have not yet been able to lend them you, not having them in my hands. It is enough that I give you my Word once more, and that you have them as soon as I am Master of them.

*Philo.* Will they afford us the Solution, which we wou'd ask of the *Genius*?

*Eraslus.* Perhaps they may; and some other Particulars.

*Crito.* May we not know the Author's Name?

*Philo.* I believe it may probably be *Eraslus*.

*Eraslus.* You will soon be un deceived on reading them, *Philo*; not to mention the difference of Style, you will find, toward the End, some Syllogisms in form, which . . . . .

*Crito.*

*Crit.* Syllogisms, *Erastus!* That is sufficient for clearing you of the Charge. You have hitherto given them but bad Quarter; and it is evident you are no Friend to them.

*Philo.* I could not have imagined it possible for *Erastus* to relish any Treatise, where Syllogisms are employ'd.

*Erastus.* Very well. *Philo* gives me a good Rub. At that rate I should be a Formalist, or Pedant, if the Form of a Book was capable of disgusting me. I should be as well pleas'd that the same Power were ascribed to the Binding.

*Philo.* Why, seriously, *Erastus*, a fine Binding gives a Book a certain Beauty, and prejudices a Man in its favour. Judge then whether a less or more agreeable Form is not sufficient to recommend, or discredit it, independently of its Contents.

*Erastus.* It must be acknowledged that there is something in the Form, that imposes on the Judgment, and that a Man must be well advanced in the Element of the *True*, before it has no Influence on him. I do not pretend to have made so great progress, *Philo*; but in regard to Syllogisms, the prejudice must be too gross, if the Form alone was sufficient to affright me; and that, without enquiring whether they are employ'd for demonstrating what is true, or disguising what is false.

*Philo.* It seems a little hard to distinguish in this Case; since all Syllogisms appear design'd for opposing the *False*, and demonstrating the *True*. How shall we strip them of that borrow'd Shell, or reach the *True* through it? Must we here have recourse to the colour'd Glasses?

*Crit.* Now you speak of colour'd Glasses, or false Reasonings; I had just now a mind to ask *Erastus*, whether he ranks all sorts of Reasoning in the same Class.

*Erastus.* The very Appellation of false Reasonings supposes some may be true or just. Thus, for example; we have been walking here two Hours and a half: It was past Five, when we came from home: Therefore it is

now half an Hour after Seven, from all which I conclude it is time to think of Supper.

*Crito.* That is an unanswerable Argument.

*Philo.* I have no Inclination to venture on the Character of Opponent, unless it be after Supper.

## DIALOGUE XIX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **H**AVE you read the Gazette of this Day, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.* Not yet; though you know I am a great News-Monger.

*Crito.* Had I known you curious that way, I would have brought it.

*Erastus.* Very curious, without doubt. News is always agreeable, were it only to furnish matter for Conversation. Is there any thing material to-day?

*Crito.* The Gazette says, that the Scene acted the other Day, between *Urania*, *Salome*, &c. has made some noise. That several Persons are very desirous of seeing the Letters, or *Reveries*, which occasion'd them: that Miss *Nerea*, being acquainted with some ingenious Persons, has shewn them the said *Reveries*; on which there is a great diversity of Opinions.

*Erastus.* This is material News indeed. May I be so curious as to ask where you found this Gazette?

*Crito.* In more than one Place, and in *Fortunatus's* hands in particular, who is well acquainted with the Matter, and was an Eye-Witness of part of what pass'd. He happen'd the other Day to be at a House, where a Person was reading them; *Urania* and *Nerea* were present. The first of these Ladies began with censuring the mixture of the Serious with the Gaiety of Style. The second directed her Criticisms against some Faults in the Construction, which betray'd the Author's Ignorance; not to mention his Ignorance of Logic.

The Remarks of those two Ladies had not an equal Weight with the whole Company. Some were not displeas'd with the Gaiety of the Stile; they were of opinion, that was not the least diminution of the Weight of the Matter. As to the Faults in the Construction, they were easily pardon'd in a *Reveur*.

Somebody took upon him to observe, that the Form was to be pass'd by, and the Substance to be considered. *Fortunatus* seconded him; and added, that it wou'd be proper to enquire what could be the Tendency of such Principles. The Majority differed from him; that wou'd remove all Subject of Dispute too soon; and the Whole terminated immediately in the Uprightness of the Will, and sincere Obedience to Conscience: Those were Principles which no one wou'd venture to attack; it was easier to carp at Trifles. The Ladies, in particular, were for the latter Game. To put an end to the Difference, it was concluded that the Ladies and the Gentlemen of the same Taste, should be allow'd to examine the little Niceties; while those of another Taste, undertook to enquire into the Substance of the things themselves.

Who excepted against this Division? The Ladies, without doubt. They wou'd not hear of the Proposal, especially when they found not one of the Gentlemen wou'd venture to engage in their Party. What wou'd have pleas'd them in general, displeas'd them in particular; they must be admitted to the Examination or Discussion of the things themselves.

Here the poor *Reveries* were dissected. The first Question propos'd was, whether the Authority of Conscience ought to be rais'd above that of Reasoning. Several thought not; but they were soon embarrass'd by the Sequel of the *Reveries*; where it is proved, that if Conscience is not allow'd the Precedence, it is render'd useless among Men.

They then went on to enquire whether Conscience is any thing or nothing. Not one wou'd venture to give a Voice for the Negative: Not one wou'd pass for a Person without a Conscience. After this, they enquir'd

whether every Man was obliged to obey his Conscience ; and here several of the Company were gravelled.

Should they say one may be excused such Obedience, this wou'd be the same as having no Conscience. Should they own that Conscience ought always to be obey'd, this wou'd justify the Substance and main drift of the *Reveries*. Here was no room left for Chicanry.

This prov'd an ugly Dilemma for the Majority. Most of the Company declined allowing either ; and yet there was no Medium : a Choice must be made ; either the *Reveries* must gain the Cause, or it must be maintain'd that Obedience to Conscience may be dispensed with.

Some declared for the former, and look'd on the latter as what could not be maintain'd. They enumerated the horrid Consequences which wou'd result from that Thesis ; and appeal'd to their Opponents, whether they wou'd have any Dealings with Men of such Principles. To this no Reply was made. The Opposition lay more in the Wills, than in the Understandings, which discover'd more than they cared to see ; and the Subject was of too simple a nature to admit of Obscurity ; the common Shift of such as wou'd avoid the Blow.

They were now reduced to the Necessity of falling on the Form again. The little Niceties were once more brought on the Carpet : Some revoked the Agreement made of sticking to the Substance. What follow'd, however, was more diverting. The little Niceties allow'd more room for shewing their Wit ; besides, this Discussion did not refer them to the Sentiment of Conscience, but rather served for an agreeable Amusement. Thus ended the Dissection of the *Reveries*.

*Eraſtus*. A very curious Gazette !

*Crito*. *Fortunatus* told me, this Scene proved as good to him as a Sermon. I made no difficulty of believing him. It shews the secret Aversion or Opposition of the Mind to all that can rectify it.

*Eraſtus*. It is easy to see, this Opposition comes merely from a Want of Uprightness in the Will ; which is  
afraid

afraid of every thing that may shew it's *False*. When it cannot fall on the Substance of Truths, it cavils about the Form. Nothing is so industrious, or so fertile in Inventions, as a false Will, for disguising the *True* from one's own View and that of others. It knows how to make use of Evasions and Sophisms. If it unfortunately happens to stumble on some Truths too simple and immoveable, it begins to shuffle the Cards, and Chicanry is its last shift.

*Philo*. You told us, *Crito*, that you found this Gazette in more places than one. Who, beside *Fortunatus*, told you this News? Did they all speak of the same Scene?

*Crito*. No; there are other Scenes which wou'd be too long to relate; I had them from some Ladies. Several People said, they were surprized that Men of Parts, like *Crito* and *Philo*, should give into such *Reveries*.

I ask'd the first, who made me this Compliment, if she had read them. No, said she; but I have heard enough of them to know their Value. Among the rest, Mr. ——— a Gentleman of great Learning, was saying the other day, that this way of Writing was not to his Taste; and besides, that he did not entertain those Notions.

Another Gentleman, continued she, an Acquaintance of yours, who passes for a Wit, said, there were indeed some good things in them; but then there were many as silly. I have had it from others, who are Men of Erudition, that it is very evident the Author is a *Reveur*: that the Pieces are a heap of mere empty Words without Sense. Judge now, whether I am not sufficiently inform'd of the Contents of these *Reveries*, and have not reason to be surprized to see *Philo* and you, give into them hand over head.

Let us wave this Subject, said I, and talk of a thing that concerns you. You told me the other day, you design'd to purchase a valuable Diamond; I have one here that will please you. Let me see it, said she. There is no necessity of that, answer'd I; first give

me leave to blindfold you. You are very pleasant, replied she, in putting me on making a Purchase of that Importance without using my Eyes. You shall form a Judgment of it by mine, said I. Hold there, answer'd she; yours are too much prejudiced in favour of what you wou'd dispose of.

I then asked her, whether we should stand to the Judgment of the Gentlemen she had been mentioning. You do not imagine I will, said she; they understand Jewels as little as they do sowing and spinning. Once more I beg, I may be allow'd the Use of my own Eyes.

I asked her, whether she observ'd this Conduct on all Occasions. What, said she, do you think it reasonable, I should blindfold myself, in order to borrow my Neighbour's Eyes? That is the fashion, replied I; and, without going very far, I could produce you an Instance of it. Here I look'd at her, and smiled.

I understand your Unluckiness, said she; you would insinuate that I have judg'd of the *Reveries* by the Eyes of others. You are somewhat in the right; but, in short, I consider'd them as learned Men, better able to judge of them than I. Why then, asked I, do you not depend on them for setting the value on a Diamond? A pretty Question, answer'd the Lady; they have not directed their Studies that way; it wou'd be below them. Perhaps, replied I, it is not less below them to study *Reveries*. I grant that, said she; but, after all, had the Question turned on what concerned me so much as the Purchase of a Diamond, I should not have so blindly submitted to their Determination.

Do you think, said I, it is more allowable to submit blindly to the Decisions of others, in regard to the *True* and the *False*, and that you run no hazard in judging of them by the Sentiments of Men, who may commit a thousand Mistakes? You distrust my Judgment in the Price of a Diamond, because you apprehend I am prejudiced in favour of it. Do you suppose Prejudice finds no room among the Learned? I know they value themselves on being free from it. Must we take their Word



on this Occasion? Are they sufficiently acquainted with the bottom of their own Hearts, to give a distinct Account of the true Cause of their own Judgments?

That Science is peculiar to *Reveries*; it is all practical and experimental. Very much time is required for forming an Adept in it. It is extremely mortifying to Self Love.

It, replied she, by the Study of *Reveries* you understand the Knowledge of one's self, or a long Study of one's own Heart; I dare not undertake to assure you that the Authors, whose Opinions I have produced, are well versed in it. Their Studies, perhaps, are of a very different kind; they cannot take in so many things at once. At that rate, answer'd I, we ought to be content with asking their Opinion of things in which they are conversant.

Right, said she; but if I am to take no notice of what I have heard said concerning the *Reveries*, I shall not know what to think, or say of them when they are mention'd. That is pity, answer'd I. Were I in your place, I should think and speak of them what a Man could think and speak of what he never saw. But, said she, what if I should find my self incapable of judging of them after I had seen them? Why, then, replied I, you should give no judgment of them; but ingenuously confess your Incapacity.

I never acted in this manner, said she; and nothing seems to me more difficult. The Mind cannot bear to remain thus in suspense: it loves to declare itself by a *Yes* or a *No*; and has still less inclination to let others see its Incapacity, or want of Judgment.

We had a good deal more Discourse on Prejudice, and the Humour of deciding, which, with several Persons, supplies the place of Knowledge. I asked her, for instance, whether there was any demonstrative Argument in saying, with an air of Assurance, *This is not to my Taste: I do not entertain those Notions: There are some good Things in them; but abundance of silly ones: They are a Heap of Words, void of Sense.* It must be  
own'd

own'd this is convincing. Here she burst out into Laughter, and left me, assuring me it was without any Rancour.

*Eraſtus.* I did not expect Gazettes so material.

*Philo.* I think one Circumſtance in the firſt diverting; viz. that the Ladies, who at firſt gave their Opinion for examining the little Niceties, could not bear to be left in poſſeſſion of that Employment in particular. Certainly ſome Metamorphoſis was wrought in their Taſtes and Ideas.

*Eraſtus.* Metamorphoſes of that kind are not uncommon. Men love to conceal themſelves in the Croud. Sentiments and Paſſions are introduced among them, the bare Names of which would be frightful.

Reſiſting the Truth, not being able to allow it entrance within us, employing all our Art in diſguiſing the *True*, and varniſhing over the *False*, as well as in rendering Perſons ſuſpected, whoſe Uprightneſs, and Sincerity are troubleſome; this, in plain Terms, is *Envy*, *Double Dealing*, *Artifice*, and *Malice*. Take away the Words, the Reality gives no pain; on the contrary, it affords more Relief than the contrary Qualities.

*Crito.* Where is the Man who could view himſelf one Moment in this Picture? I doubt thoſe who moſt reſemble it, will not be diſpoſed to know themſelves in it.

*Eraſtus.* If the Originals of ſuch a Picture had courage enough to own it, they would ſoon ceaſe to be like it. But the Endeavours they uſe to conceal it from themſelves, ſtrengthen a Doubleneſs of Heart in them, which makes them impenetrable to Truth. In proportion as they ſtifle the Sentiments which it produces in the Conſcience, it becomes more eaſy for them to reject what may be offer'd without; I mean, the Teſtimony which Perſons in poſſeſſion of the ſame Truth may bear of it.

*Crito.* I remember that, among *Philo's* Objections, which gave occaſion to the *Reveries*, there was one which he will now find it difficult to ſolve.

*Philo.* I underſtand you, *Crito*. I was ſo complainant

fant to Conscience, as to place to its account, not only Superstition and Fanaticism, but even the Spirit of Persecution. I can now say, in the point of View, in which I see things, that nothing seems to me more opposite.

*Eraslus.* Whence proceeds so great a Change in the Point of View, *Philo*? Have the mature Reflections, you have made on the Subject, undeceived you?

*Philo.* I have made no particular Reflection on it since. The truth is, at the first Glance, I see now things in a very different Light; and perceive that I formerly took Black for White.

*Eraslus.* You passed, however, for a Man of great Judgment.

*Phil.* And I pretended to be so; or rather, was desirous of passing for such, without appearing to pretend to that Character. The Word has an ill sound; the more we pretend to Wit or Judgment, the less we can bear being told so.

*Crito.* The Title of *judicious* is generally esteem'd in the World.

*Eraslus.* The Reality of it is very valuable; but I doubt whether there are many capable of distinguishing those who are really judicious, from those who have only the Appearance of being so.

*Philo.* A Man must be judicious himself, before he can determine who is or is not judicious.

*Eraslus.* He must be so in a superiour degree: as in every Art, when the Value of a Work is to be determined, we chuse not a skilful Journey-man, but an Adept or Master.

*Crito.* This is practis'd, when Arts are concerned; but it is evident, Men think very differently on the Subject in question. The World is full of People, who would not pretend to claim the Character of judicious, and yet set up for Judges of those who are so.

*Eraslus.* I would fain ask several Persons, who every moment pronounce this Man is more judicious than that, by what Rule they judge? In short, what is meant by being judicious, and what by being more or less so?

*Philo.*

*Philo.* It seems most difficult to settle the *More* and the *Less*.

*Crito.* And yet, every one imagines himself capable of doing that. Nothing is so common as to hear it said, this Author is more judicious than that.

*Erastus.* On what is the Preference we give one to another commonly grounded? On a secret Inclination to what pleases us most, to what contradicts us least; on our Interest or natural Propensities; not to say our Prejudices, which are often only the Consequence of them.

*Philo.* You here consider Prejudice as a Consequence of Interest and Inclination. I remember you told us, not long ago, that there were some Persons, whose Prejudices have been formed by others, and thus are become involuntary.

*Erastus.* I said, there are some, whose Prejudices were become almost insuperable by the disadvantageous Circumstances in which they were placed. But it doth not thence follow, that all the Prejudices formed in us by others, before our Consent, are always involuntary. They certainly are so at first; but they afterwards become more or less voluntary, according as we have more or less the means of divesting our selves of them.

*Philo.* Now I understand you, dear *Erastus*. You mean that those Prejudices, which at first are only the result of Education, often become, at another time, the Effect of Passion and Interest; because entertain'd and strengthen'd by them. It is certain, that most of our Prejudices would easily vanish, were they not rooted in some hidden Interest. The truth is, Prejudices do not pass for what they really are with those who entertain them, but for sound Ideas. Interest passes still less for Interest, unless it be for an Interest in establishing Truth, and a Love of sound Doctrine.

*Erastus.* We may say of Prejudices and Interest, what we just now said of the most odious Passions. If those who entertain them could call them by their proper Name, they would thus deprive them of their greatest Force: they would not be able to subsist long, when  
once

once unmasked. But Men make their own Chains, by bellowing specious Appellations and fine Colours on the Passions; and thus disguising them so long, and consequently strengthening them, they cannot afterwards disengage themselves from them.

*Crito.* It may always be truly said, therefore, that if a Man persists in Disorder, and in the *False*, it is because he will not see his own Situation: and that knowing his Situation, is the first Step toward quitting it.

*Eraſtus.* It may likewise be truly said, that false Judgments most commonly proceed from the *False* of the Will; whence it follows, that those who are not yet acquainted with the *False* of their own Will, and consequently still remain in it, are not capable of forming a right Judgment, and setting a value on things.

*Crito.* If they are not capable of forming a right Judgment, they cannot be judicious.

*Philo.* Ergo, the first Step towards becoming judicious, is to know one is not so.

*Eraſtus.* And, as there are very few, who do not think themselves judicious enough; there are but very few in a condition of becoming so.

*Crito.* A Man, who should imagine himself born a Master-Joiner, for example, would not be willing to pass through the Classes of Apprentice and Journeyman.

*Eraſtus.* I fear, that many, on quitting this Life, find themselves divested of the quality of Masters in the Art of setting a just value on things; and that the Apprenticeship, which they must serve in the other World, will prove harder than it would have been in this.

*Crito.* What do you think, *Eraſtus*, will be the Nature of such an Apprenticeship in the other World?

*Eraſtus.* The Letters, which I have promised you, concerning the State of the Dead, will explain that matter to you better than I can. In the mean time, we may form some Conjecture of what that Apprenticeship will be, from the small Beginning of it which we experience here.

*Crito.* Do you know that I was endeavouring to find out a shorter way for acquiring a right Judgment, or be-

becoming judicious, than that of Uprightness of Heart ? Methinks that way is too long. I perceive that the Heart can become upright only in proportion as it unveils itself ; and this appears to me very mortifying. Self-Love would be pleased with a shorter and more agreeable way.

*Erastus.* Do you not know, *Crito*, that Men have invented the Art of making it so ? Instead of studying their own Hearts, taking directions from Conscience concerning the secret Motives on which they act, viewing distinctly the Pretexts, with which they cover their Intentions ; in short, instead of examining the Principle of their Judgments, and enquiring what makes them lean one way rather than another ; instead, I say, of this long and mortifying way, they have abridged the whole, and made all easy.

“ In order to acquire a right Judgment, there is no  
 “ necessity of Practice ; Speculation is sufficient. By  
 “ the former a Man may acquire Uprightness of Heart :  
 “ by the latter, that of the Mind. These two Qualities  
 “ have no absolute dependance one on the other ; and,  
 “ as there are Persons, who have an upright Heart,  
 “ without thinking justly ; so, on the other hand,  
 “ there are some, who think justly, without Upright-  
 “ ness of Heart. *Ergo*, in order to become judicious,  
 “ we have nothing to do with Conscience, or studying  
 “ the Motions of our Hearts.”

*Crito.* This is really the usual Method of becoming judicious, or acquiring a right Judgment. This way of reasoning would be generally received, was it not a little too plainly worded. For who would venture to say, in express Terms, that a Man's Heart may be upright, though he doth not think justly : and may think justly, without having an upright Heart ? This Maxim has somewhat grating to the Ear ; and several who adopt the Substance, would not bear the Form of it.

*Erastus.* I know it is not customary to express one's self so bluntly ; and I rather design'd to give you a practical Language, than a distinct and particular one.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* Every one, who thinks himself judicious, flatters himself at the same time, with Uprightness of Heart; and if Men were obliged, in discourse, to give the Preference to either of those Qualities, they certainly would, without hesitation, bestow it on the latter. They would even acknowledge themselves very imperfect in regard to Justness of Thought; but as to the Heart, their Uprightness is entire.

*Erastus.* Are we to be surprized that they willingly give the preference to Uprightness of Heart, in Discourse? 'Tis because they have nothing to do for acquiring it: they are already possess'd of it, and with their Mind as just as their Heart is upright. Thus they proceed to perfect their Mind and Judgment, with all possible Application.

*Crito.* It seems therefore, dear *Erastus*, that you may erase out of the Reasoning, you have made or supposed, that shocking Maxim; That Justness of Thought and Uprightness of Heart are separable: and instead of it, advance this; That, though Justness of Thought and Uprightness of Heart are inseparable, as a Man is already in possession of the latter, his Business is not to labour to acquire it; but to endeavour to perfect himself in the former.

*Erastus.* Certainly this Language is not so harsh as the other; and I readily agree to the Exchange. It is true, it supposes the thing in question; but, after all, it is a charitable Supposition, and there is no danger on that side.

*Crito.* But, would there be no danger, if this Supposition should be false?

*Erastus.* All the danger would be, that on leaving this Life, those, who had falsely imagin'd themselves upright of Heart, would have no less to discount than the Man we mention'd just now; or rather, their Case would be exactly the same; because it is decided, that Justness of Thought and Uprightness of Heart are inseparable.

*Philo.* This Maxim will certainly pass for an established one; but no, so well established that no farther  
Care

Care is to be taken or any other Steps to be made, for acquiring Justness of Thought, than for attaining to Uprightness of Heart.

It will be said, the Application or Labour by which the Judgment is formed, is one thing; and the Conduct, by which a Man strives to reform his Heart, another. One is speculative, the other practical.

*Erastus.* This partly comes up to the Reasoning, which I offer'd. This Proposition is more specious than the Maxim which *Crito* thought shocking.

*Crito.* It might be material to enquire into it a little.

*Erastus.* In the mean while, we had better enquire, whether it is not time to decamp.

*Crito.* I would not willingly enquire too nicely into that Point; perhaps we may find we have not a Moment to lose. However, we have one Expedient for setting our Minds at ease; each of us may put his Watch back three quarters of an Hour; and thus we shall have time before us.

*Philo.* This it is to be fertile in Expedients.

*Erastus.* If you chuse to rest in Illusion, I leave you all the Pleasure it can give you.

*Crito.* It can afford none, if you will not bear us company; and I perceive the pleasure of going with you will get the better of that of deceiving ourselves. I wish it was always so.

## DIALOGUE XX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **W**ould you think I have found, in the *Necromancer's Fable*, an Explanation of the Proposition, which we wanted to be examin'd last Night?

*Erastus.* Dear *Philo*, you every day make unexpected Discoveries; and I perceive that, in return for the Title of Professor of *Reveries*, which you have conferr'd on me, I ought to grant you that of Professor of Fables.

*Crito.*



*Crito.* I esteem it a great Honour; and *Philo* is required to respect me in that quality.

*Philo.* I will so, when Mr. Professor has given us fresh Proofs of his Art. We are ready to hear him.

*Crito.* I take it for granted, you will excuse the preliminary Discourses used in entering on such an Office. I have not had time to prepare my self; and besides, they would tire you.

“ To come to the Proposition, which we undertake  
“ to examine, by an Example taken from our Fable,  
“ it will be proper that the Scholar, who brought it  
“ on the Carpet, should repeat it. You, the first;  
“ What is the Proposition to be explain’d to-day?”

*Philo.* *Whether the Method taken for forming the Mind or Judgment, is different from that employ’d for reforming the Heart.*

*Crito.* “ In the present Question, the Heart and the  
“ Will are synonymous Terms. We shall employ the  
“ latter, as more proper for explaining things. Tell me;  
“ When People undertake to judge of the Disposition  
“ of a Country, to measure with their Eyes in a comparative way, the greater or less Extent of the Fields,  
“ Vineyards, Meadows, Gardens, &c. in order to  
“ perform this well, is not one Place or Situation  
“ more advantageous than another?”

*Philo.* “ Yes.

*Crito.* “ Let us suppose two Persons have the same  
“ Design; that one of them is on the level Ground of  
“ the said Country, and the other stands on a Hill;  
“ which of the two Situations is more advantageous?”

*Philo.* “ That of the Top of the Hill.

*Crito.* “ In order to begin to go up this Hill, must  
“ not the Person have a will to do it?”

*Philo.* “ Certainly.

*Crito.* “ And ought he not likewise to have one for  
“ continuing his Journey?”

*Philo.* “ Yes.

*Crito.* “ The Will then must be concern’d through  
“ the whole Journey.

*Philo.* “ Without doubt.

*Crito.* “ And are not the Eyes also concern’d all the way ?

*Philo.* “ They are.

*Crito.* “ Can they discover and discern Objects as distinctly at the foot of the Hill, as toward the top ?

*Philo.* “ No.

*Crito.* “ When the Person in question has reach’d the Summit of the Hill, are not the Eyes commanded by the Will to turn more or less on this or that side ; to view such and such Objects less or more ?

*Philo.* “ Yes.

*Crito.* “ Is it in the power of the Will to make those who have walk’d only some Steps, discover all it can make them see, who have advanced three quarters of the way ?

*Philo.* “ No.

*Crito.* “ What Expedient does the Will employ for putting the Eyes in a condition of discovering an Extent of Country ?

*Philo.* “ That of making the Man walk.

*Crito.* “ Do you not thence conclude, that, in proportion as this Man goes on, he discovers a larger Extent of Country ; and is thus put in a condition of forming a better Judgment of Objects ?

*Philo.* “ Without doubt.

*Crito.* “ Can you prove that, by any Circumstance taken from the *Necromancer’s* Narrative ?

*Philo.* “ Because the Light increases, as People advance in the little Paths, toward the Country of Light.

*Crito.* “ To leave the Figure at present ; What is here meant by the Eyes, or the Faculty of seeing ?

*Philo.* “ The Understanding.

*Crito.* “ What is meant by the way to be taken, for enabling the Eyes to discern Objects ?

*Philo.* “ The Steps of the Will.

*Crito.* “ Whither do those Steps tend ?

*Philo.* “ Toward universal Truth.

*Crito.* “ In what do they consist ?

*Philo.* “ In complying with and obeying all the Dictates

“ Dictates of Truth, deliver’d either by the Language  
“ of Conscience or that of right Reason.

*Crito.* “ Will not one, who takes Conscience and  
“ right Reason for his Guides, become judicious?

*Philo.* “ Very judicious.

*Crito.* “ Here then is a Demonstration of our Pro-  
“ position; that only one way is to be taken, and the  
“ same Steps are to be made, for acquiring, at the  
“ same time, both Uprightness of Heart, and Justness  
“ of Thought.”

*Philo.* No Objection can be offer’d, and Mr. Pro-  
fessor is duly installed; this Catechism is better than a  
preliminary Discourse.

*Eraſtus.* I expected Mr. Professor would have ex-  
amin’d me in my turn; and was studying for an Answer.

*Crito.* Is it proper that Mr. Professor of *Reveries*  
should appear here as a Scholar?

*Eraſtus.* Why not, dear *Crito*? A Man may be a  
Professor in one Science, and but a very young Scholar  
in another.

*Crito.* I yield, *Eraſtus*: I understand that were there  
Professors in the mechanical Arts, a Man might be  
Professor in Clock-making, who would be but a young  
Scholar in the Art of Shoe-making.

*Eraſtus.* You thence conclude, no doubt, that you  
would not apply to a Shoemaker to know the value of  
a Clock.

*Crito.* Neither would I apply to a Clockmaker to  
know the value of a Shoe.

*Philo.* Now you talk of setting a value on things, or  
being judicious, I recollect what gave us occasion to  
talk on that Subject yesterday. It was the remem-  
brance of a judicious Objection, I had formerly made  
against the Authority of Conscience; I had been civil  
enough to place the Spirit of Persecution to its account;  
not to mention Superstition and Fanaticism. At pre-  
sent I have a difficulty to persuade my self it could  
ever come into my head; particularly as to what re-  
gards the Spirit of Persecution.

*Eraſtus.* The different Point of View, in which you

at present behold Objects, shews you have changed your Place. The Will has made some progress within you toward Truth. Are you to be surprized that your Judgment is corrected by Truth, in proportion to the Reformation carried on in your Will by the same Truth? Your own Experience is a strong Confirmation of what Mr. Professor has been saying.

*Crito.* It is not less so of what *Erastus* demonstrated to us the other day, concerning the Distinction and Relation between Conscience and right Reason.

*Philo.* I hardly remember it.

*Crito.* The Substance of it was, *That the Business of Conscience in Man is to endeavour to make him upright ; in order to perform that, it renders him sensible of his False, and makes him perceive the False of his Will before it lets him see the False of his Ideas.*

*Philo.* Now I have it ; and, without going very far for an Instance, I find one in what has befallen my self. When I magnified in my Imagination the pernicious Effects resulting from obeying Conscience, the *False* of my Will was the Spring, that put Reasoning and Imagination into motion, in order to give me an indifferent Opinion of a Method, which it was unwilling to pursue. The Queen \* had obtained the Votes of her Parliament, and then the Parliament demonstrated, by their Council, what she wished to be persuaded of.

*Erastus.* It is certain that the Will has Council well formed to its Humour. *Passion, Interest, Imagination* and *Prejudice* may be consider'd as Chamber-Council, who furnish *Reasoning*, the pleading Council, with Notes. This Council, provided with so many Pieces, cannot fail of persuading her Ladyship, the Will, or rather of making her believe she is persuaded.

*Crito.* Our *Necromancer*, without doubt, designed to express those different Advocates or their Memoirs, by the different Colours of the Glasses.

*Erastus.* That may be ; and when he tells us that most of the Manufacturers of the Country are employ'd in making those Glasses, there is perhaps something real in what he says.

*Crito.*

\* See the Eighteenth Dialogue.

*Crito.* Without leaving *Europe*, it appears that this Manufacture is universal. It is not rank'd among the mechanical Arts; it is so highly dignified, that even Princes take a pride in making such Glasses. All, who have any degree of Superiority over others, think they have a right to furnish their Inferiours with them of their own making.

Pursuant to this Right, Princes and Magistrates require their Subjects to take them in Civil or Political Affairs, and sometimes even in what regards Religion. Prelates and all Ecclesiastics in general require the Laity to deal with them for this sort of Goods.

Hence it is easy to guess that Masters, Preceptors, &c. furnish their Disciples or Scholars with them. The same may be said of Parents in regard to their Children; in short, all, who have any ascendant over others, may oblige them to take Glasses of their making.

*Erasmus.* Among the Qualities proper for giving an ascendant, Wealth and Titles of Honour are not the least considerable. Is a Man in a condition of advancing the Fortune of others, his Glasses immediately come into vogue; he reasons justly. He approves of a new Book, every one is for buying it, before he knows what it contains.

*Crito.* The same Effect is produced by a great Reputation for Learning; but, after all, Wealth, Titles and Reputation have an ascendant over the generality of Mankind, only by their relation to the Chamber-Council, or the Notes prepared by them.

*Prejudice* produces a piece on the universal Reputation of some great Man: *Interest* produces several on the Advantages which may accrue from his Approbation: *Imagination* is a kind of Microscope for shewing all his fine Qualities; and the *Passions* are sufficiently justified by the unanimous Votes of the other Counsellours.

But, all things rightly consider'd, it will appear that this Gentleman, so famous for his Merit, his Rank, his Wealth, his great Genius, &c. was mistaken when he imagined he had an ascendant over the Minds of his

Neighbours ; his Merit was no more than a Pretext for putting in play the Passions, Prejudice and Self-interest of his Admirers.

*Eraſtus.* Could not the ſame Council ſhew the other ſide of the Medal, according to the Turn given by Mr. *Interest*, firſt Chamber-Council ?

*Crito.* Nothing more eaſy. Suppoſing the ſame Perſon an Antagoniſt, *Prejudice* immediately draws up a Memorial, ſetting forth that People of Merit are diſabuſed in regard to their eſteem for him. *Imagination*, in quality of a Microſcope, places to view Faults, ſo much more conſiderable as they were before imperceptible. *Interest* and the *Paſſions* unite in compoſing Pieces of the utmoſt force ; which will admit of no Answer. The pleading Counſellour has nothing to do but to work them up, and give them a new luſtre with his Rhetoric and Eloquence.

*Eraſtus.* At that rate, would not the ſame Perſon appear on one ſide of the Medal in the form of a Hero, and on the other in that of a Devil ?

*Pbilo.* I imagine that *neutral* Perſons, who ſhould know that Man only by theſe oppoſite Representations, would be very much puzzled to determine which of the two was moſt like him.

*Crito.* I farther imagine that *neutral* Perſons, ſuppoſing them judicious, would not undertake to determine which Piece came neareſt to an Original, unknown to them. They might indeed form a Judgment on the report of others ; but then they ought to be well aſſured that none of the Counſellours is concern'd in the Affair. Even ſuppoſing thoſe, with whom they deal, too honeſt to receive Pieces drawn up by *Interest* and the *Paſſions*, would they be guarded againſt taking thoſe compoſed by *Prejudice* ?

*Eraſtus.* Honeſt Men of that turn of mind are as ſcarce and valuable as the *neutral* People, who are to diſtinguiſh them. Rather let us ſay, that Men of this ſort are the only Perſons capable of being truly neutral.

Could the Heart be laid open, we ſhould ſee that Men incline to one or the other ſide, only by their Affinity

finitude to those several Counsellours, and the Memorials they receive from them. Even good Men are not exempt from this Frailty in a certain degree; and if they are less subject to it than the generality of Mankind, it is only because they are better acquainted with themselves in that Point, or have a greater Diffidence in regard to the secret Springs, which the *Passions* or *Prejudice* may put into motion. How many Men, in general, pretend to a Neutrality, who have not the Shadow or even Idea of it.

*Philo.* Methinks the Idea of *Neutrality* ought to suppose that of Uprightness.

*Erastus.* It is perhaps Uprightness itself in the most eminent degree. I speak of an entire and universal *Neutrality*, almost as hard to be found among Men, as the Phenix in its kind; for as to certain particular *Neutralities*, they are to be rank'd in another Class; and it is easy to meet with some of that kind in certain Cases, where the Memorials of the Counsellours could not be admitted. Not to speak of this sort, which is of no great value; true *Neutrality* ought to have an infinity of degrees: its Apprenticeship is long: the most real is that which makes us most sensible of the difficulty of attaining it.

*Philo.* *Neutrality* is not less esteem'd in the World than the quality of *judicious*; I should imagine, that, taking the matter right, one is not very different from the other.

*Erastus.* The several *Names* given to whatever is good and beautiful, are universally esteemed.

Never any Man pretended to disapprove of *Good* as such, nor approve of *Evil*, as *Evil*. We are induced to reject *Good*, and receive *Evil*, only by the different Colours, with which each of them is disguised.

But while Men openly reject the Reality of *Good*, they preserve the Name of it with the utmost Jealousy; and the same Jealousy, frequently appearing in the opposite Parties, has given being to Wars of all kinds.

Some have been carried on, under pretence of maintaining Truth: others under that of doing Justice; and Right has always been on both sides. In a word,

from the greatest States down to the most diminutive, that is, each private Family, Division has been justified by the precious Names of *Truth*, *Equity*, *Right*, &c. Words well worth preserving.

And as Men of Penetration have been very sensible that in order to distinguish what is just, right, equitable, &c. a Person ought to be *judicious*; they have express'd all the Esteem for that Appellation, which it deserves; every one reproaching his Adversaries with not being able to distinguish the *True*, the *Right*, the *Just*, &c. because they are not *judicious*.

And, as others, still more penetrating, have discovered that it is impossible to be *judicious* without being *Neuter*; *Neutrality* has been canonized. Every one values himself on that disposition; and at the same time charges all of the opposite Party with being strangers to it. In short, when Terms only are in question, Men are passionately fond of the *True*, the *Just*, the *Equitable*. Do not tell them of Persons who are prejudiced, obstinate, partial, &c. *In order to become judicious*, say they, *a Man must be perfectly Neuter*. This Language is common; but the reality not so.

*Philo*. I should think real *Neutrality* can never take place, while Interest has a Voice in the Judgments we form; because *Neutrality* is the same as the *Equilibrium*; and the slightest Interest would be able to turn the Scale.

*Erasmus*. Judge therefore, dear *Philo*, how far we have to travel in the Knowledge of ourselves, before we can be in a condition to judge rightly, or give Things their just Value; since all right Judgment is founded on *Neutrality*, or an *Equilibrium*, and this *Equilibrium* is formed only in proportion as the Heart is wean'd from the Passions and all private Interest.

*Crito*. At that rate, who will pretend to be perfectly *Neuter*? Not *Crito*.

*Erasmus*. Some time ago, *Philo* wou'd not have failed of applying that Character to *Erasmus*.

*Philo*. I should be very cautious of doing it now. I have suffer'd too much on the like Occasions. Besides, to tell you the Truth, I cannot be so generous,



as I once was, in bestowing Perfections or heroical Qualities. I then gave them away, without any trouble to myself; at present I should be apprehensive of injuring Truth by my Liberality.

*Erasmus.* You make me a Compliment, which wou'd not go down with all the World. Where wou'd be the danger. *Philo.* in your bestowing on me some Qualities which I have not, at the Expence of Truth?

*Philo.* You will oblige me to speak, *Erasmus.* But, to let you see, I have not so soon forgot my Lesson, I answer, that it would be dangerous both for you and for me. A word to the wife.

*Erasmus.* This comes of not rightly understanding one's own Interest. I have given you Lessons, which you turn against me, by esteeming me less than you wou'd otherwise have done. Were it not for that, you wou'd have given me some Qualities, which I must now be content to want. You wou'd have made me *judicious*, and consequently entirely *Neuter*.

It is true; after you had bestow'd that Quality on me, it wou'd have been in your power to divest me of it again; I should have lain at your mercy in that point; but, in the mean time, I should have been in possession of something.

*Philo.* That is sufficient for setting a Value on the advantageous Opinion others may entertain of us.

*Crito.* You may say what you please, *Philo*; and as much a Lawyer as you are, you will make no great progress in disabusing Men in that point. They are resolv'd to pass for Persons of Merit, for Persons of an upright Heart, and a just way of Thinking. Whether they are really so or no, is not the Question. It is always good to suppose they are. A good Reputation can do no harm; so much the worse for them, if they do not deserve the Character; they must endeavour to make it their due.

*Erasmus.* 'Tis pity I did not learn this Lesson sooner; you wou'd then have had more advantageous Notions of me. I ought indeed to have endeavour'd to deserve them. But what Art is here understood? What I wou'd

wou'd fain learn, is, perhaps, a compendious Art, calculated for saving me much trouble. It wou'd be worth while to be acquainted with it : But we will reserve the Explication of it for to-morrow.

## DIALOGUE XXI.

CRITO, PHILO, *and* ERASTUS.

*Erastus.* **W**ILL *Crito* be pleased to tell us, what is the Art, by which a Man may endeavour to merit the good Reputation, he has already acquired, without deserving it.

*Crito.* Before I pretend to instruct you in that Art, I ought to be well versed in it myself; and as I borrow'd what I said of it yesterday from a certain Person, I thought I ought to have recourse to the same Author for the Explication. With that View, I went to him early this Morning; and the Conversation turn'd of itself on the Point in question. He repeated his former Arguments; I at present wave the Repetition of them. I begg'd of him to explain what he meant by those words, *Endeavouring to merit the good Reputation, one had already acquired, without deserving it.* He told me, it was labouring to acquire Uprightness of Heart and a just Way of Thinking. I then asked him, whether he look'd on this as the Work of a few days? Whereupon he replied, that, on the contrary, he was of opinion it wou'd require much Time.

The Man in question, then, said I, will find it a laborious Task to merit the Reputation, which he has acquired without deserving it; or, to speak more properly, which he has usurped; for all unjust Possessions are really so many Usurpations. He did not disagree with me.

Thereupon I asked him, whether the least Degree of Uprightness doth not require us to restore what we possess unjustly. A pleasant Question! said he. That is the first step towards it. Which, continued I, is reckon'd

kon'd the greater Good in the World ; the Reputation of Integrity and Judgment, or the Possession of some hundreds of Pistoles ? Can any Man make the Comparison ? said he. None but those, who are Slaves to Avarice, are capable of giving the Pistoles the Preference.

Would you not, replied I, look on a Man, who should unjustly possess an hundred *Louis-d'Or's*, and refuse to make restitution, as one void of Uprightness ? Is that a Question ? said he. How then, asked I, ought he to be called, who should unjustly possess the Reputation of an upright and judicious Man, without being willing to part with it ? Would you stile him just, or unjust ? Unjust, replied he.

Is Injustice a Good, or an Evil ? said I. He readily pronounced it an Evil. Is not what is an Evil, hurtful ? replied I. Very hurtful, continued he.

Agree with me then, answer'd I, that a good Reputation, unjustly acquired, may be hurtful ; and that if we are obliged to endeavour to deserve it, we ought to begin with, as much as in us lies, those whom we may have deceiv'd by false Appearances.

Here my Gentleman had nothing to answer ; and was obliged to own that a Reputation, established on the *False*, cou'd not be good. However, to have something to say, he added, that several wou'd not understand how to go to work in this Affair of disabusing the Public ; they wou'd enquire whether they were to make Proclamation, &c.

I observed to him, that this Objection carried us a little out of the question, which was, Whether *a Reputation establish'd on the False, ought to be consider'd as a Good or not ?* The Business at present is rather to know what we are to think, than what we are to do. But as a different way of Thinking, must necessarily have an Influence over the Conduct, it is natural that the Language should favour of it ; and that a Man, for example, whose Maxims have imposed on others, should disabuse them.

Uprightness produces a Love for Truth. As soon as a Man loves Truth, he loves it both in regard to himself and

his Neighbour ; and is thereby obliged to disabuse him of all the *False* he may have occasioned in his Ideas, and even in his Conduct. Here we were interrupted, and the Discourse ended.

*Eraſtus.* I hate thoſe Imperiments, *Crito* ; methinks you were going on finely. There is hardly any Subject on which Men commit more miſtakes, than that of Reputation, well or ill acquired ; though it be grounded on the *False*, it is ſtill good in their Opinion. They do not obſerve that they thus call an unjuſt Thing a Good, becauſe they are unacquainted with the cloſe relation between the *False* and the *Unjuſt*, as likewiſe between *Uprightneſs* and *Truth*.

*Crito.* Here is a Remark to be made. Reproach a Man with conſidering an unjuſt Thing as a Good, he will deny the Charge with ſome indignation. Give the Affair another turn, and ask him whether he doth not ſeek to be eſteem'd more than he deſerves, he will own he does ; for Men do not comprehend that whatever is founded on the *False* is unjuſt, and that whatever is unjuſt derives its Origin from the *False*.

*Philo.* I ſhould like to ſee that Theſis explain'd ; that is a Task for a Profeſſor.

*Crito.* Do you direct your Diſcourſe to *Crito* ? I beg you will be pleaſed to remember he is only Profeſſor of Fables ; and that a Theſis of this nature ought to fall under the Cognizance of Mr. Profeſſor of *Reveries*. It was to him I propoſed it ; and I muſt confeſs I deſerve to be laugh'd at for ſtarting a Theſis, which I am incapable of explaining thoroughly.

*Eraſtus.* No doubt, you ſend the Ball back to me. Take notice that it is not the buſineſs of a *Reveur*, gravely to undertake the Explanation of a Proposition. Should he attempt that Task, he wou'd acquit himſelf of it much like the Aſs with the Doctor's Cap.

*Crito.* I think, however, that this *Reveur* ſometimes manages a Subject pretty well.

*Eraſtus.* If ſo, it is certainly by chance. He never learnt the Art of Reaſoning : he is a Stranger to all Method ; and it is not without reaſon that he is accuſed of being no Logician.

*Philo.*

*Philo.* You are one, however, *Eraslus*; just as those who have never learnt to fence, know how to use their Swords on occasion. Methinks, though you have not learnt the Art of Reasoning, you understand how to handle an Argument.

*Eraslus.* Do you think, *Philo*, my Arguments, when taken to pieces and reduced to Form, are always the most just? I do not offer them as such. I advise you to be on your guard. I perceive this Compliment doth not hit your Taste; and that you would ask me where something of Certainty may be found.

*Philo.* You enter into my Thoughts, *Eraslus*; and I know some, who, on hearing you talk in this manner, wou'd believe you in great danger of falling into an Error. If, say they, you are not assured that your best Arguments are free from Mistakes, how can you be certain of having discover'd the Truth by such Arguments?

*Eraslus.* This might be a proper Question, did I make that use of Reasoning which they imagine. I should call this, putting the Cart before the Horse. In natural Things, we reason on what we see and perceive; but do not see or perceive the Consequences of such Reasoning.

Thus, for example, the bare Sense of Smelling informs me, there are Pinks and Tuberoses in this *Parterre*. I see them at one glance of the Eye. I then reason on what I see and smell; thence I judge of their different Qualities, of the Season when they were planted, of the Manner in which they have been cultivated, and how long they may continue.

In the same manner I reason, when I wou'd unfold a Truth, of which an Attention to right Reason has given me a glimpse; not with a View of determining by Argument, concerning the Dictates of right Reason.

Hence it is easy to discover the difference between Reasoning and right Reason. Right Reason ought to be the Principle of Reasoning; but Reasoning can never be the Principle of right Reason: because to make

an Argument just, it must be established on the *right Rule*, without which it never will be right. If so, all Reasoning independant of the same Rule is false. If it is false, how can it lead to what is true, or serve as a Principle to right Reason ?

*Philo.* May it not be said that the multitude of contrary Arguments, with which the World is over-run, comes from the same Source ? Men have undertaken to make their way to right Reason by arguing, instead of taking right Reason for the Principle of their Arguments.

Hence it is, that, in opposite Parties, those who are most dextrous in the Art of Reasoning, have only made the Division wider ; every one chuses some particular way of Reasoning, for his Principle, which serves as a Foundation to an Infinity of others.

*Erastus.* At the same time, every one pretends that right Reason is the only Principle of his Reasoning ; this is evident from Experience. What is *One*, cannot occasion Division : but what is *One*, is *Simple* ; and right Reason is but little known in its Simplicity, which is the Essence of it ; and by that alone it is invariably right, and exempt from all Contrariety and Mistakes. In a word, should it cease to be simple, it wou'd no longer be right Reason.

*Philo.* And that, if I am not mistaken, because *primitive Truth* is simple, and right Reason is only a Ray or Emanation of that Truth.

*Crito.* If right Reason is simple, it is *universal* ; if *universal*, all Men ought to have a right or be in a condition to consult it.

*Erastus.* All Men have a right to consult right Reason ; but very few have the Dispositions requisite for so doing. *Neutrality* or an *Equilibrium* is the Basis of it : This *Equilibrium* is formed only by the Uprightness of the Will, a freedom from Passion and Prejudice which turn'd the Scale on their side.

Before the Will can be free from the Passions, and Prejudices to which it is a slave, it must feel the Power they have over it. In order to perceive that, it must allow

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Conscience to speak, to unveil its hidden Motives, and lay open its most secret Intentions.

This is the Business of Conscience, which corrects the *False* of the Will only by shewing it; and the Will becomes upright only, so far as it consents to see that *False* such as it is, and no longer seeks for pretences to justify it.

This is the first step the Will makes in Uprightness, it thus enters the beginning of the *Equilibrium*; and though that cannot be complete so long as Prejudice and Passion subsist, it takes place, in some degree, when the Will mistrusts their Suggestions, and refuses to listen to them.

This beginning of an *Equilibrium* enables us, in some measure, to hear the Dictates of right Reason; and the Language of right Reason, takes place in proportion, as that of Prejudice, Interest and Passion loses ground.

When the latter is ever so little listen'd to, it, by its Diffusion and Multiplicity, produces a Noise and an Emotion, which fills the whole Capacity of the Understanding; so that it can no longer distinguish the simple Language of right Reason. If we pretend to form an Argument, while in such a Disposition, it will be raised on the Language of Passion, Prejudice or Self-Interest; and how specious soever it may appear, it can never be just.

The Conclusion is easy; that an Argument is more or less just, as the Will is more or less upright.

*Crito.* It may likewise be concluded, that, before a Man can reason justly, he must be willing to be thoroughly acquainted with his most secret Intentions, and the most hidden Springs of the Judgments he forms.

*Erastus.* And what can penetrate through so many Covers? Shall it be Reasoning? But they are made by Reasoning itself, with the Colours it gives to Illusion. We have already seen that Reason can be just only in proportion as the Doublings of the Heart are unfolded. How shall we reconcile this?

I wou'd fain know whether the Discovery of our most secret Intentions is to be effected by a just, or by a false way of Reasoning. It will be replied, that this must be performed by just Reasoning. But, then, how can it be just, if a Man is unacquainted with the secret Springs that may form it ; or with the Pretexes, drawn over his Intentions, in order to dress them up in fine Colours? At that rate, it must be said that Reasoning ought to be just, before it can possibly be so.

*Philo.* This is an Explanation of what was said in the Letters on Conscience, concerning the Authority it ought to be allow'd over Reasoning ; and shews that that Authority doth not abolish the due use of Reasoning, much less that of right Reason.

*Crito.* Might not this likewise explain the Paradox, almost universally receiv'd in the World? I speak of the different Manners in which Men reason, where there own Interest is not concerned, and where Prejudice and Interest may have some share. In this point, those who are best versed in the Art of exact Reasoning, differ so much from themselves, that one cannot be enough surprized at it.

*Erastus.* This indeed is the Knot of the Question. It cannot be denied that Men of a certain Genius commonly reason justly, where they are neuter. In a Point of Law, for example, they will be sufficiently capable of distinguishing what is just from what is unjust. So likewise in natural things, particularly in what we call Mathematical Truths, they reason very justly.

But the Case is widely different wherever their Passions are interested, and in every thing proper for justifying or unveiling them.

Here Religion comes in, which concerns the whole World. But where shall we find Men truly neuter in regard to Religion. I know not whether there is any Case where Neutrality is harder to met with.

*Philo.* Men are indeed concerned on a thousand Considerations to look at Religion in a certain Point of View. Every one sees what he has a mind to see, when  
he



he doth not mistrust the hidden Principles, which may determine his Judgment.

*Eras.* Those *secret Principles*, those *fine Strings*, which put the whole Machine into Motion, without being perceived, cannot be discovered, but by the simple Language of Conscience.

This active Language, without entering into Particulars, makes a Man sensible how false the Motives are, on which he pretends to proceed. Were it allow'd to go farther, it wou'd, on particular Occasions, let him see what makes him incline more to one side than to another. It wou'd plainly shew the real Bottom of the Intention, of that pretend'd good Intention, which is no more than a Pretext, with which the true Intention is disguised.

*Crito.* Men do not care to go too deep in such Enquiries. The most penetrating Understanding is here quite blind; so that it must be own'd that Penetration is not employ'd in these Points. Let it be used without, as much as you please, in the most difficult Sciences; the Knowledge of what passes in the inmost Recesses of Men's own Hearts, is of less importance.

*Philo.* Or rather, it wou'd give them too much Mortification; they wou'd not purchase the Character of being judicious so dearly.

*Eras.* You are mistaken, *Philo.* They are not in the Humour of quitting that Character; and though they do not deserve it on that score, they may on several other accounts.

*Crito.* You mean, *Eras.*, that they may be very judicious in every thing, which doth not fall under the Cognizance of Conscience.

*Eras.* If you please, *Crito*, you may add, And in every thing, where they are not interested either directly or indirectly. I here speak of those whom you suppose always without themselves, and consequently but little attentive to the secret Springs which determine their Actions.

It is no hard matter to comprehend that Persons of this sort, having no good Information of what passes  
O within

within themselves, cannot distinguish the Language of Passion or Interest from that of right Reason. In all other respects they may be allow'd the Title of *judicious* ; and there are few People who are not less or more so in their respective Professions, when they have applied to them seriously.

*Philo.* For the same Reason, if Men applied themselves heartily to the Study of what passes within themselves, they wou'd soon become judicious in those things which fall under the Cognizance of Conscience, and in every thing in general, where Religion is concern'd.

*Erastus.* You go on a great pace, dear *Philo*. In order to be judicious, wherever Religion is concern'd, a Man must have made a considerable Progress in the Study of himself, in that Uprightness and Disinterestedness, which form the *Equilibrium*, and without which he can be judicious only in a narrow and limited manner : There is an extreme distance from the first Degree of the *Equilibrium*, to that entire *Equilibrium*, by which a Man is enabled to distinguish the *True* from the *False* in all regards, and set a just Value on every thing.

*Philo.* You see, *Erastus*, that I reason like a young Scholar, who is not thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of a Work : the Business is soon done in his Imagination. I understand that, with a beginning of Uprightness, a Man may be judicious enough for himself to discern by the Sentiment of Conscience, and an Attention to right Reason, the *Just* and the *True* in relation to himself, and what he ought to admit or reject. But how far is it from this point to that distinct and universal View, which can only be the Effect of an entire *Equilibrium*. On that foot, the poor young Scholar, *Erastus*, will have much Work cut out, before he reaches it.

*Erastus.* Let us shake Hands on that Article, *Philo* ; and though you have been pleas'd to honour me with the Character of Professor of *Reveries*, I own myself still a young Scholar, in regard to the Disposition in question.

*Crito.* It is not long since, I should have been tempted, to call *Erastus* a very judicious Man in all respects.

*Erastus.* You wou'd then have had the pleasure of shewing yourself very judicious; as you wou'd have been capable of judging *Erastus* such in all respects.

*Crito.* It happens luckily for us both, that we are excused giving one another the Lye in an obliging manner. Each of us ought to be believ'd on his word, how much soever he may speak to his own disadvantage.

*Philo.* From this time, there is no danger that either of us will be inclined to exaggerate.

*Erastus.* This is another Advantage resulting from the Bargain we have made; Exaggeration being extremely opposite to a just Way of Thinking.

*Crito.* I was just now thinking of the Discourse, I told you we had last Night concerning Reputation. Methinks *Erastus* has hitherto omitted nothing, that might undeceive us of the too advantageous Ideas we might entertain of him. I know some, who would think in a different manner, and tell us, that in order to give more weight to the Truths he is explaining, we ought to conceive a more exalted Idea of his Merit and Judgment.

*Erastus.* This is laying the Interest of Truth to heart. On this foot, you need only dress me in those fine Qualities, which I have given up; and then all I can say to you will be of a very different Value. You will immediately consider me as a Model for your Imitation: Your Ideas will be moulded in mine; and you will become faithful Copies of so perfect an Original.

This it is to be able to do honour to Truth by the universal Reputation a Man has acquired. The Question does not turn at present, on the private Advantage that may be reaped from such a Reputation; but on the Interest of Truth, which is supported by it.

*Crito.* We ought to omit nothing in our power for procuring so desirable a Good.

*Erastus.* Our Reason ought to run thus: " Truth is the greatest of all Goods: all that can contribute to its being receiv'd by other Men, is consequently a Good. Reputation is of that Claſs: it gives weight to Truth, and ſerves to do it honour. *Ergo*, Reputation ought to be eſteem'd as the greateſt of Goods."

*Philo.* This is a demonſtrative Argument, eſpecially when employ'd by the Chamber-Council. *Erastus* ſhall unfold the Conſequences of it more at large.

*Erastus.* That ſhall be done to-morrow, if you pleaſe. It is time to break up the Aſſembly for the preſent.

## DIALOGUE XXII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Philo.* **W**ELL then; it was determin'd laſt Night, that Reputation is the greateſt of Goods; ſince it is the Means for doing honour to Truth. This being once allow'd, I know not how *Erastus* can juſtify his own Conduct. He has hitherto taken a contrary Method. He ſeem'd yeſterday inclin'd to act differently, when he obſerved to us, that his Arguments might want Juſtneſs, and adviſed us to be on our guard in that Point.

*Crito.* It muſt be acknowledged, *Erastus*, that, after ſuch Warning, your Arguments will not have ſo much weight with us, except for the Intereſt of Truth, you take care to reſtore them to their former Reputation.

*Erastus.* But, ſuppoſing the Intereſt of Truth, and the Credit of my Arguments, ſhould chance to be two diſtinct things.

*Philo.* Why ſhould they be conſider'd ſo, *Erastus*? Have your Arguments any other Tendency, than that of ſetting Truth in a proper Light.

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* And supposing that, instead of placing Truth in a proper Light, they should only obscure and confine it.

*Crito.* That is not your Design, *Erastus*.

*Erastus.* Most certainly it is not, *Crito*. And, to convince you that I am a stranger to such a Disposition, I wish you wou'd consider Truth as entirely independent of my Arguments. Thus it will be out of the reach of all I can say for confining and obscuring it.

This was the end of all I may have said to make you mistrust them; and I think the Love of Truth requires that, if I cannot be serviceable to it by my Arguments, I should, at least, avoid injuring it by them, and apprise my Friends of the Value they ought to set on them.

*Philo.* This is a way of having the Interest of Truth at heart, which I should not have thought of.

*Crito.* We were much out in our Reckoning, I perceive. We imagined that the Interest of Truth required *Erastus* should make his Arguments valuable; whereas, on the contrary, he shews us that the Love of Truth requires he should discredit his own Arguments, that it may not in the least suffer by their want of Justness.

*Philo.* At that rate, he wou'd prove that the Interest of Truth has no Connection with that of his Reputation. Whence it would follow, that Reputation being no longer a proper means for doing Honour to Truth, it ought not to be esteem'd as the greatest of Goods.

Reconcile yourself to yourself, dear *Erastus*; or at least, reconcile the Contrarieties in your way of Reasoning.

*Erastus.* This shews what Value you ought to set on it, since it is self-contradictory. One side must certainly be false.

*Philo.* Let us know, *Erastus*, on which of the two we are to depend.

*Erastus.* Should I tell you that, *Philo*, you wou'd judge of them by my Eyes; and I think it is your Interest to make use of your own in this Case.

*Pbilo.* Well, *Crito*; to which of the two Arguments shall we give the preference? To that which maintains that the Interest of Truth requires a Man should support his Reputation, and the Justness of his Reasoning; or to that which, on the contrary, maintains that the greatest Interest of Truth requires he should consider it as entirely independent of any one's Arguments and Reputation?

*Crito.* How shall we begin the Enquiry? Shall we dissect each particular Term? Shall we give each of those Arguments all the different Forms of which they may be susceptible?

*Pbilo.* Rather, *Crito*, let us first enquire which of the two is most to our taste, and which ought to carry the Prize. After that, we will bestow a Form on it that shall fully demonstrate it.

*Crito.* This is hitting the Mark, and understanding one's own Interest at the same time. But, methinks *Pbilo* and I have play'd the Comedians sufficiently for to-day; and that the Parts we have acted may give us occasion for serious Discourse.

*Pbilo.* In the mean time our Professor of *Reveries*, seem'd to take no notice of us; but though he put on a grave Face, I could see him laugh in his Sleeve.

*Eraflus.* I had a mind to see how long the Scene wou'd last; and found it too instructive to interrupt it.

*Crito.* It may serve to shew that the Art of Reasoning is of great use for demonstrating all a Man desires should be true.

*Eraflus.* Reasoning might likewise be employ'd by those who have discover'd the *True*, in order to explain it to others.

*Pbilo.* But how shall it be known who have discover'd the *True*? All Arguments wear the Appearance of it; and yet the most specious are frequently the most false.

*Eraflus.* And those which are most just in Substance, may easily be defective in Form. I think, after all, that the Question must be decided by the Uprightness of those who make them, and that of those who examine them.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* I imagine such as make use of Reasoning, only with a View of explaining the *True*, do not make choice of the most compound Arguments. The *True* ought to have in itself an Evidence far superiour to what Art can produce.

*Eraſtus.* Neither the Composition nor Subtily of Arguments, are Prejudices in favour of the Uprightness of the Disputant. 'Tis the common Shift of such as fear a strong Light, both for seeing others and themselves.

This might be termed throwing Dust in a Man's Eyes; were not the Comparison of the *Glasses* more significative on this occasion. Dust thrown into the Eyes incommodes or dazzles them, without disguising the Objects. The Glasses produce a more agreeable Effect; they magnify or diminish the Objects at the same time, that they colour them. Such is the Effect of subtile and compound Arguments.

Either Arguments of this kind are either employ'd for explaining the *True*; or have a Tendency to varnish over the *False*. If the latter, we may thereby judge of their Value: if the former, they are fitter for obscuring than demonstrating the *True*.

Compound Arguments ought to be suspected on all accounts; if they are not pernicious, at least, they are superfluous. They may be ranked among that multitude of Words, which *Solomon* considers as contrary to Uprightness. Simplicity is inseparable from Uprightness; if it is not one and the same thing.

*Pbilo.* This is certainly the Sense of the Words of the Gospel: *If thine Eye is simple, thy whole Body will be enlighten'd.*

*Eraſtus.* The *Evil Eye*, which is oppos'd to it, in like manner signifies the Disposition of one who squints or looks aside; one who will not see things as they are; in short, one who fears Day-light, and winks with his Eyes to avoid the sight of it.

*Crito.* This is evident to the Sense; and I am persuaded that every Man has more or less Experience of it. I can speak of my own in this Case. I am sensible I

have a thousand times reasoned with design of dazzling myself, and defending myself against a certain *Je ne sai quoi* that condemned me. At other times, I have multiplied Arguments to disguise certain Truths, which I was unwilling to admit, and conceal from my own View the secret Principle which prompted me to reject them.

*Philo.* This has long been my Case in regard to what *Erastus* said on Conscience and Sincerity. I ask'd him for Explications, one after another; but still some Obscurity remain'd, some Difficulty was still unresolved. He wou'd have serv'd me very rightly, had he only answer'd me with the common Proverb, *No one is so deaf, as he who will not hear.*

I must tell you one thing, which served me as a Pretext for resisting what I perceived but too true. When *Erastus* gave us to understand that Conscience was his only Master, I imagined he admitted its Voice, exclusive of that of right Reason. All he said of Reasoning, I applied to right Reason; and could not conceive how Conscience alone cou'd teach all *Erastus* told us he had learnt in his School.

*Erastus.* I must own I have been all along very careless in the choice of my Terms, or the manner of expressing myself.

I have acted somewhat like a Man, who, shewing the Key of a Closet adorned with valuable Paintings, should say that Key gave him the Privilege of seeing them. It wou'd easily be understood, however, that he could not see them without opening his Eyes, and without the Assistance of the Light.

When I was speaking of the School of Conscience, in my Letters or *Reveries*, I ought to have said, that I consider'd Conscience, or Uprightness in obeying it, as the Key of true Knowledge, as the *Introduction to all Truth*; only the Term *right Reason* was wanting; the reality of it was sufficiently implied.

*Philo.* You remind me, *Erastus*, that in the same Place, mention is made of the *Equilibrium*, as an Effect of the same Uprightness: *that by this Equilibrium the*  
False



*False in Ideas, or Opinions, intensibly falls to the ground;* that by it we are better enabled to discern the *True*.

I know not where my Eyes were, when I did not see that the whole ended in right Reason. But I was like those Scholars, who must be questioned in the very Terms of their Catechism, and are quite lost when put out of that road.

*Crito.* How many Scholars, who go not to School, are on the same foot! Present the *True* to them, divested of certain Terms, which they look on as sacred, they are at a stand; they exclaim against Heresy and Innovation. Give them back the same Terms without the Things, and they are pacified. This is the sound Doctrine, to which they are to stick fast!

*Erastus.* I acknowledge that a *Reveur* like me would be violently suspected by Men so regular in Terms. One while he would be charged with Heresy; another, with false Reasoning, with contradicting himself, and having no regular Method and System. Ought this to be matter of Surprise? A *Reveur* never was systematical; he thinks without Method, and reasons in the same manner; so that he will not undertake to warrant the Justness of his Thoughts and Arguments; he leaves his Friends to judge of that. Nor will he answer for Heresy; as he is not infallible, he is not secure from Error.

*Crito.* Here Mr. Professor of *Reveries* leads us into a fine Labyrinth.

*Erastus.* I am doing just the contrary, dear *Philo*; and were you in one, the Warnings I have given you would be proper for leading you out of it.

*Philo.* Do you call this leading us out of it; when you are making us distrust both your Arguments, and the very things, which seem'd to us most evident?

*Erastus.* By teaching you to distrust my Arguments, I take nothing from the Evidence of Things. I leave you room to see it in itself, independent of my Arguments. Thus you are freed from the Slavery of Turns and Expressions, calculated rather for cramping, than demonstrating the Truth.

You

You are placed in a condition of daring to view it in a *simple* and *unlimited* Manner, suitable to what it is in its simple and universal Origin.

Hence you may descend to distinct or particular Truth, consider what is essential in each of them, and how they are relative on one side to simple Truth, and on the other to intelligent Creatures.

You may likewise distinguish among particular Truths, such as are more accessory or more foreign to primitive Truth; such as have had a Beginning, and must cease to be of use, after they have served as indirect means for conducting Men to Truth. Of this sort are the historical Facts, and an infinity of particular Circumstances contain'd in the Scripture, as so many Testimonies which Truth bears of itself.

You will view those Truths in as simple a manner as the nature of each will permit. By considering them in their *Principle*, in their *End*, and in their *Use*, you will strip them of all the borrow'd Forms with which Opinion has clothed, not to say disguised them.

You will venture to think on this Subject, without framing your Ideas on those of others. You will not dismiss the Idea of the *True* or *Evidence*, when it shall offer itself, under pretence that some able Men have thought differently, or perhaps have proved the contrary by methodical Arguments.

By an Effect of the same Liberty, you will no longer measure the *True* by your old Measures, by your former Ideas, which you once employ'd as a Rule for limiting or rejecting what went beyond them.

The first Degrees of the *Equilibrium*, into which you will enter by the first Degrees of Uprightness, will not allow you to consult your own private Interest, or listen to Prejudice, when the Question turns on distinguishing the *True* from the *False*.

On the same Principle of Uprightness, inseparable from Simplicity, you will desire to know, only in order to obey. As you make greater progress in Neutrality, or the *Equilibrium*, you will be in a condition of knowing all things more distinctly.

In the mean time, you will mistrust the badness of your Sight, and become judicious, more by suspending than by passing your Judgment. You will be content with judging of what you certainly know, and that only when it is absolutely necessary you should determine on a Choice.

Is this carrying you into a Labyrinth, *Crito*? For my part, I might justly charge you with throwing me into my *Reveries* again by your Labyrinth. You have now had a Sample of them.

*Crito*. No Reproaches, I beseech you, good *Erastus*. You shall not have one word more of the *Labyrinth*; your *Reveries* of this day have taught us the Secret of getting out of it; and I even defy you your self to entangle us in one hereafter, so that we shall not be able to get out of it by the help of the Key, you have given us.

*Erastus*. My Design was to guard you against the *False* which my Arguments might occasion, as well as what might come from any other quarter. In this View, I declared I warranted nothing I might have said to you.

I thought I did you a friendly Office, by engaging you, in my turn, not to see things with the Eyes of other Men; to consider them in their Substance, and independent of their Form; to mistrust the too favourable Prejudice you might entertain of me, and which might as effectually impose on you as the contrary Prejudice.

*Pbilo*. Pray, *Crito*, how shall we call this Art of indulging *Reveries* without Art, by which *Erastus* has, in a few Minutes, run over the Substance of all that has hitherto been said in our Walks?

*Crito*. It would be much easier for us to give it a Name, *Pbilo*, than to make a proper Advantage of it. Nothing is so agreeable, in the Point of View, as this *universal Plan*, free from all Systems, or particular Plans. Nothing is so agreeable to good Sense as to venture to consider the *True* in it self, independent of the different Forms, with which the Opinions of Men have disguised it. Nothing is so beautiful as a Neutrality

trality or *Equilibrium*, which alone can put us in a condition of forming a sound Judgment of things.

This is the difficult Point. It is easy to perceive the necessity of such a Disposition ; to comprehend that, without the *Equilibrium*, we shall always incline to one side : but it is not so easy to understand ourselves well in that particular.

*Philo.* You are in it, *Crito*.

*Crito.* How, *Erastus* ! Do you say I am in the *Equilibrium* ?

*Erastus.* Not quite, as to the Reality ; though you have the first degrees of it. I mean, you entertain just Ideas of the Difficulty of knowing one's self in that Point.

*Philo.* I was listening with all my Ears, to know what surprising flight *Crito* had taken, to get into the *Equilibrium* at once. I had flatter'd myself with not being very far from it. But he is brought down from his elevation, and consequently, I too am humbled in the same manner.

*Crito.* I was examining myself how I travelled thither. *Erastus* would not perhaps have found it a difficult Task to persuade me I am at my Journey's end ; and who knows whether, not being able to give any tolerable account of my manner of travelling, I might not have imagined it done in my sleep ? Judge now, dear *Erastus*, how much credit your Suffrage might have with me.

*Philo.* Let us judge from this, *Crito*, of our propensity to enter into what pleases us. Should we be so honest and credulous on the other side of the Question ? I am afraid that *Erastus*'s Suffrage would lose ground, if Mr. *Interest* was concern'd in the matter.

*Crito.* Hold ; let us not touch on that String. This is too tender a Point among Friends. What have we to do with Mr. *Interest* ? He is out of the present question. We are talking of Neutrality, and the *Equilibrium* ; and are not to suppose he can give his voice there.

*Erastus.* A very good thought. This now is the way to soar up immediately into a perfect Neutrality.

When

When we are once come to think that private Interest can have no influence over us in regard to most Opinions which we espouse, it plays its part, without being perceived, and consequently much more to its own advantage. The less we suspect the private Inclinations which may determine our Judgment, the less we think ourselves capable of Prejudice and Partiality. Thus it is easy to think ourselves in the *Equilibrium*; Imagination transports us thither; it gives us a beautiful Representation of that Situation; the Colours are at its command.

*Crito.* And perhaps while the Imagination is playing so fine a part, Mr. *Interest* plays his privately, when we least suspect it. In good earnest, I find this is but too much the Case; and if I knew my self better, I might say more on that Subject.

*Philo.* I know several, who would not understand what relation Interest can have to Ideas or Opinions. They would have taken what *Crito* just now said on that Point very seriously; and have thought it judicious not to confound things so unlike. Besides, a Man loves to find his work done; and it is more easy to banish Interest in Imagination, than to venture to enquire what Credit it has with us, and endeavour to oppose it in good earnest.

*Eraslus.* Men are naturally inclined to inquire into the Causes of what offers itself. They take a pleasure in discovering its hidden Springs. As soon as some artfully contriv'd Machine appears on the Stage, all ingenious Persons are immediately employ'd in finding out the Secret. They do not stop at what strikes the Eye; they must know all the Particulars.

As for discovering the Springs, which put the whole Machine within themselves into motion, that is not of so much importance; it is sufficient that they know the outside, and judge of it by what others think of it, or, perhaps, what they seem to think of it themselves. After all, it may be supposed that a good Effect must necessarily proceed from a good Cause. Is not this a way of Reasoning that admits of no Reply?

*Crito.* Certainly.

*Phi-*

*Erastus.* Let us see whether we may not find some Objection against it. Every good Effect must proceed from a good Cause. We judge Water to be good at the Spring, when it is so in the Stream. But the Case is not the same in moral Things. In order to know whether an Effect is good or not, we must first examine the Cause; since the whole value of the Effect is taken from the Cause which produces it. So that here we may alter our Thesis, and say, *We must judge of the Effects by the Cause, and not of the Cause by the Effects.*

*Crito.* At that rate, every one would have no small Discount to make, especially Persons of Merit; I mean, the Actors of the wise World. I very much doubt whether they would be inclined to judge of themselves in this manner. They would stick to the old Thesis, and without the least hesitation, judge that so many fine and good Effects, so generally esteemed, can proceed only from a good Cause. This is making short work.

*Erastus.* This would be convenient enough, was not the reckoning to be set right in the other World; where, perhaps, the Mistake will prove more fatal than in this.

*Philo.* I already perceive by what I have experienced of the matter, that this Misreckoning is a serious Affair. Nothing mortified me more than to see so many fine Qualities vanish, which I had, through Mistake, ascribed to others. I was accustomed to conceal the bottom of my own Intentions from my self, by that pretended good Intention, which *Erastus* mentioned yesterday. I took that superficial Intention for the true Principle of my Actions; and was highly delighted with myself on being well regulated, not only exteriorly, but also interiorly, by the good Intention, which attended my whole Conduct. Judge now, if it was not a Mortification to me to have a Discount to make, and . . . . .

*Crito.* Alas, *Philo*, we are not yet come to the end of the reckoning; I believe we have a much larger Discount to make, before we shall know ourselves to  
the

the bottom, and be able to discover the secret Springs of our Actions.

*Erastus.* Nothing is less observed than what *Philo* has been saying of that superficial Intention, which is made to cover and disguise the real Motives of our Actions; this is what makes so many satisfied with themselves. It is a common Maxim, that the best Actions, done on bad Motives, are good for nothing. It is not enough to do good; we must likewise add good Intentions. This is in every one's mouth.

In reality, this way of speaking sufficiently expresses the Case. They are good Intentions, *added*, not to say *stitched*, to what is call'd Good, or a good Action; they are not the *Root*, or living Principle; they serve to justify what was before determined by a hidden Principle.

However, we are very well satisfied with ourselves on these Terms, and give ourselves double Applause, both for what we call good Actions, and the pretended good Intention, which is the Principle of them.

Were it necessary to produce Examples of this, they might be easily found, without mentioning such as each of us could give from his own Experience.

*Crito.* I perceive it would be more agreeable to us to look for them in past times, than to recollect the Experience we have had, not to say the Experience we every day have of the matter. What say you, *Philo*?

*Philo.* I am intirely of your mind, *Crito*; and to take our Eyes off of ourselves, we need only look into the *Jewish* History, or into that of the Life of JESUS CHRIST, and the first Christians. Observe, for example, the Zeal of *Demetrius* of *Ephesus* for the great *Diana*, the Image that came down from *Jupiter*. What is more reasonable than to defend the Interest of the Goddess? Private Interest was the Spring that put all into motion: The Interest of the great *Diana* came in very seasonably for justifying, and even canonizing the Action of *Demetrius*.

*Erastus.* This Instance says something; but it is not one of the most refined. The *Jews* and *Christians*  
might

might furnish us with some better calculated for imposing on the World. We may guess from thence, that the more spiritual the Religion presented to Men was, the more refined were the Pretexes they employed for substituting Appearance in the place of Reality.

*Crito.* *Philo* and I thought ourselves delivered for some time, from the tiresome Task of seeing ourselves, by looking back for what we did not care to see. But, what is extremely mortifying, those very Examples soon led us to that disagreeable Prospect.

*Erastus.* Since that is the Case, *Crito*, it is a sign you was not very far from it. Those who in a Review of times past, seek only to lose sight of themselves, succeed to their wish. Every thing proves a Diversion to them; and they do not see themselves in the Pieces which most resemble them.

*Crito.* Perhaps they are angry with the Originals, of which they are Copies.

*Erastus.* Nothing so common; but I believe we forget ourselves. I know not which of us has brought some secret Charm with him that keeps us here so long to day.

*Crito.* That Charge can fall only on Mr. Professor of *Reveries*, formerly dignified by the Title of Magician.

## DIALOGUE XXIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **I** Have just left one, who has been talking to me of you, *Erastus*; and that much to your advantage.

*Erastus.* What is his Name, *Crito*?

*Crito.* *Hilarius*, Son-in-law to *Serapion*.

*Erastus.* He is a Man of Merit; and, among other good Qualities, very judicious.

*Philo.* Are you particularly acquainted with him, *Erastus*?

*Erastus.*



*Erastus.* I never spoke to him, I know him by sight ; he has a Mien which prejudices one in his favour ; besides, I have heard him very well spoken of.

*Crito.* This is being even with one another. He likewise esteems you, on having heard much said to your advantage ; and I doubt not, but if he knew the value you have for him, his Idea of your Merit would be heighten'd. I shall not fail to let him know it the first time I see him.

*Pbilo.* I have heard *Hilarius* spoken of in a different manner. He is by several charged with Attachment, and want of Delicacy, when his own Interest is in question.

*Erastus.* They are prejudiced Persons, *Pbilo* ; or perhaps have an Interest in talking of him at that rate.

*Pbilo.* May it not as well be supposed that those, who have spoken to his advantage, may be prejudiced in his favour, or perhaps have an Interest in crying him up?

*Erastus.* What Interest can they have in that ? This is diving too deep into things ; a Man cannot be too easy of Belief, when he would judge charitably.

*Pbilo.* True ; but take care, *Erastus*, that while you judge charitably on one hand, you do not judge rashly on the other, by charging those who have spoken disadvantageously of him, with Calumny, or bad Intentions. Enquire a little what could engage you to justify *Hilarius*, to the prejudice of others.

*Erastus.* Unless it be the Esteem he has express'd for me, I know not what could be my Motive. But, dear *Pbilo*, will you, in your turn, enquire what could induce you to side with those who speak disrespectfully of him ?

*Pbilo.* Unless it be that, being formerly concern'd in a Cause against my Client, he carried it, I do not see what could make me suspect the good things that may be said of him.

*Erastus.* You and I, *Pbilo*, are very proper Judges of his Merit. What says *Crito* to the matter ? He,

no doubt, is neuter ; and consequently in a condition of judging such Judges as we are.

*Crito.* I am examining whether I am neuter or not. I ought to be so ; for I never had any quarrel with *Hilarius* ; and Interest can have no share in the Opinion I may form of him.

Hold ; I now remember that, in a dispute which I had with *Aristus*, he profess'd to give into my Notions ; and observed the Superiority I had over my Antagonist in certain respects. Besides, he is in my way of thinking in regard to *Trophimus* and *Gaius*, with whom I could never agree. This is more than enough for making me exceptionable. We are all three in the same Case ; and must look elsewhere for a Judge.

*Philo.* Here now is a Scene that might furnish Mr. Professor of *Reveries* with much Matter for a Dissertation in his way.

*Crito.* It gives a lively Image of the Power of Mr. *Interest* over our Judgments, over the advantageous or disadvantageous Opinion, we form one of another.

*Philo.* When *Erastus* first spoke of the Influence which Interest might have over our Opinions or Judgments, I almost thought he overstrain'd the matter : for I then consider'd Interest only in point of Money ; but I soon found that by *private Interest* we are to understand all that touches us to the quick, whatever affects us most strongly.

*Erastus.* We have, perhaps, all found by experience that when our Honour or Character was attack'd, we were not less concern'd than if our Purse had been in danger. To take the matter right, these two sorts of Interest are so closely united, that they may be confounded into one. Were we but a little accustomed to sound ourselves, to see our secret Inclinations and Views, we should find that the Interest of Fortune and that of worldly Honour, are but one and the same Object, one and the same Mark, at which we aim, without thinking of it distinctly.

*Crito.* It is evident from Experience, that one is a very proper means of leading to the other. Nothing goes farther

farther toward gaining a Man a general esteem, than a plentiful Fortune. As soon as he knows how to make himself honoured for his Riches, he commences a Man of Merit. On the other hand, nothing so much makes Men desirous of universal Esteem and Approbation, as the secret hopes they ground on them of making or improving their Fortune.

*Eraſtus.* Hence it may be concluded, that all the little private Interests are like so many small Cords, which all terminate in the great Rope of Fortune, on which that of Reputation is often no more than a Dependent. When any one of these little Cords is touched, and we find ourselves hurt by the Action, we do not think of enquiring into the Cause of it; at least we do not think of going so far in quest of it. The Subject which occasions this Pain, seems absolutely unlike the Cause itself.

*Philo.* Without going far for an Instance, what led me to suspect the handsome things said of *Hilarius*?

*Eraſtus.* And what was it that engaged *Eraſtus* to look on him with so favourable an Eye, and give him the Character of a judicious Man, without having ever heard him speak? What induced him to tax those, who spoke to his disadvantage, with Calumny; and take the contrary Opinion for right *Sterling*, without knowing which was best grounded?

If the Persons generally esteem'd, and who value themselves upon it, knew what that esteem held by, and the Principle which produces it in those who express it, they would find themselves not much obliged to their Admirers. I speak of the most sincere Esteem. He who has such a one for another, soon finds his account in it: It is serviceable to him several ways; sometimes for making a shew of his own Judgment and good Taste, and thereby acquiring the Esteem of those who hear him: at other times, for engaging a Return from the Person himself, either by some real Service, or a reciprocal Esteem.

It is somewhat singular, that Gratitude, which is now hardly to be found among Men, is always admitted, more

or less, in regard to Esteem; in that point we never miss our aim, and may depend on a return.

*Crito.* I have observed it more than once, without being able to assign the Reason. Certainly nothing is more scarce in the World than Gratitude; as long as Men may expect any thing from you, they are entirely devoted to you: Are you out of a Condition of serving them in any thing? they are at liberty, and willingly give you leave to retire to the other World.

The Case is not the same in regard to Esteem; we find no Ingrates on this Article. No sooner a Man knows you value him, but he begins to do the same by you; and though you are not in a condition of doing him any other Service, he retains a grateful Sense of that to the day of his death. He esteems you merely because you esteem him. Is any thing more equitable?

*Erastus.* Is it not possible to solve the Riddle? I fancy a little Magic would enable us to do it.

In quality of Magician, then, I unfold the Mystery, and say, that these two Contraries have but one and the same Cause for their Principle, and may very well subsist together in the same Subject. This Principle is Mr. *Interest*, who gives only with a view of receiving, and of receiving more than he gives.

Hence it follows, in the first Case, that whatever Good he has received from any one, when that Person can do no more for him, he gives himself no concern about Restitution, unless he is forced to it by another indirect Interest.

Gratitude is quite out of the question. How happens it that Mr. *Interest* is so grateful in regard to Esteem? 'Tis because, in the latter Case, he gives nothing without receiving a Return at the same time. What he gives, costs him nothing; and what he receives, sometimes procures him more than Esteem. But, though it was confined to a bare Return, he would still be largely repaid his Expences; because the Value he sets on himself is authorised by the Value set on him by a Man of Judgment and good Taste. Now he cannot avoid esteeming a judicious Man, therefore nothing

is more equitable than to esteem those who esteem us.

Thus Mr. *Interest* is engaged by a Principle of Justice to make a return in the latter Case, though he willingly excuses himself in the former.

*Philo.* Mr. *Interest* must certainly have Justice or Equity much at heart. Some People imagine they cannot agree one with the other; they are mistaken, no doubt, since the contrary is evident from Experience.

*Eraſtus.* They agree so well, that Justice and Equity lend Mr. *Interest* their Names as often as he wants them. He may even borrow their Dress on certain Occasions.

*Abſalom* is an Instance of this. It is well known that private Interest was his Counsellour in all his Actions; however, he still retain'd a great Esteem for the Names of Justice and Equity, and fetched deep Sighs for their Re-establishment. *O that I were made Judge in the Land,* said he, *that any Man, who hath any Suit or Cause, might come to me, and I would do him Justice.\**

Here now is a stroke of Mr. *Interest*'s Art in old times. He has made a considerable Progress since; his practices are more secret at present; He knows how to render himself imperceptible where he has most Power. He appears only under the Names and Dress of Justice and Equity.

*Crito.* Hence, without doubt, arises that double Intention, of which we talked yesterday. The true one is least perceptible.

*Eraſtus.* It is certain that the real Principle, on which we act, is commonly most hidden. The borrow'd Motives, by which we proceed on Reflection, are much more easily perceived.

When we have occasion to say to ourselves that we do this or that on such or such a Motive, it looks very like that *superficial Intention*, which is only put on, and serves as a Covering to the real Intention.

*Philo.* It seems to me very difficult to make a just and distinct Discovery of such secret Springs through so many Covers,

\* 2 Sam. xv. 4.

*Eraſtus.* Nothing from without can penetrate ſo far, unleſs a Principle more profound than thoſe Covers opens a Paſſage. This Principle is Conſcience. Every one feels from his own Experience that it alone can diſtinguiſh Reality from Appearance, and true from borrow'd Motives.

*Philo.* That is beyond all diſpute. I have often found that, when I was in the wrong in regard to any one, I had no difficulty in juſtifying my ſelf, at leaſt I juſtified the Goodneſs of my Intentions, and the Motives on which I acted. But as ſoon as I vouchſafed to ſound myſelf one Moment, the Language of Conſcience made thoſe borrow'd Motives vaniſh, and ſhew'd me the true ones ; ſo that I could not impoſe on myſelf, without calling in Reaſoning, in order to colour over what I had no mind to ſee in its natural Deformity.

*Eraſtus.* This comes up to the Obſervation we have often made. The Origin of the *False* is in the Will ; and introduced into Ideas by the Will. Truth therefore muſt begin with correcting the *False* of the Will, before it can correct that of Ideas.

Here the Diſtinction and Relation between Conſcience and right Reaſon is clear. The former *ſhews and corrects the False of the Will, by way of Sentiment* : The latter *ſhews and corrects it in Ideas by Evidence*.

Hence it appears, *Philo*, that I did not explain myſelf well, when I gave you room to think I admitted the Language of Conſcience, excluſive of that of right Reaſon. I conſider them as inſeparable ; and if I at firſt mention'd only that of Conſcience, it is becauſe I look'd on it as the Introduction to the other.

Were I to give a more methodical Definition than ought to be expected from a *Reveur*, I ſhould ſay that it is more the Buſineſs of Conſcience to demolish, than to build ; to make Men ſenſible of the *False*, rather than point out the *True*. The Demonſtration of the *True* belongs to right Reaſon ; but as the *True* can be demonſtrated only on the ruins of the *False*, it follows that we are led to that Demonſtration, only ſo far as we allow Conſcience to make us ſenſible of the *False*.

*Crito,*

*Crito.* This Definition seems to agree perfectly well with what has been said in the Letters on Conscience ; and methinks it gives no small light to them.

*Erastus.* In order to explain things better in regard to the Office of Conscience, we ought to go back to our Distinction of the *False* into *speculative* and *practical*. The latter is the Origin of the former ; and Conscience is in a particular Manner employ'd on the *False*, as practical.

This sort of *False* is more easily understood than defined ; and consequently Conscience discovers and corrects it by the Sentiment. This *False* is in the Will ; it is the contrary to Uprightness and Sincerity. As opposite to Uprightness, it wilfully shuts the eyes against Truth, and endeavours to impose on itself. As opposite to Sincerity, it endeavours to appear what it is not, and impose on others.

In order to impose on itself, it makes use of Pretexts, Subterfuges and Evasions. In order to impose on others, it uses Disguise, Dissimulation, and all that goes by the Name of Appearances. In this consists the *False* of the Will, or the *practical False*, on which we have observed that Conscience ought to be employ'd.

*Crito.* You said, *Erastus*, that Conscience shews the *False* of the Will by the way of Sentiment. I find a Proof of that within myself. I began to experience something of it, when I told *Philo* I wanted Honesty in regard to myself, and that I was made sensible of this Defect by a *Je ne sai quoi*, the Language of which was so true, that I could not contradict it.

*Philo.* It was to no purpose for me to put a good face on the matter ; I felt the Force of it in spite of all my Endeavours to avoid it. I was then exactly in the Disposition, which *Erastus* has just now described, in regard to the *False* of the Will.

On one hand, I strove to impose on myself, and thus became very dexterous at starting Difficulties, and evading the Question, when it pressed me too close. I then began to banter *Crito* on the Progress he made, or look on my Watch and tell you it was late.

However, I managed my game pretty well ; and by doing my best to impose on myself, omitted nothing that might impose on others. This made me complaisant in appearance, while I was very far from being so in reality. I put on an air of Impartiality and Attention to Truth, while I heard but with one Ear, and was deaf with the other. I knew how to yield at proper times, and agree to several things, that I might not be suspected of Obstinacy. I pretended to be full of Moderation, when I was most vexed. In order to disguise the matter more effectually, I began with commending *Erastus's* Penetration, and Justness of Judgment ; by which I gained a double Advantage. I interrupted him when his Discourse hit me home ; and at the same time appear'd equitable and judicious. I did not care to shew my Jealousy of *Crito* ; and when I pretended to detain *Erastus*, I could have wished he had fixed the next day for his Journey.

Judge now, dear *Erastus*, whether you have any need to be very long in explaining in what the *False* of the Will consists. I can talk learnedly of it in all respects ; and think I may say that a want of Uprightness, by which we endeavour to impose on ourselves, causes that want of Sincerity, which prompts us to impose on others.

*Crito*. Can it then be doubted that Sentiment and Experience are able Masters ? I am no longer surprized at what *Erastus* has so often said of them.

*Erastus*. All the Lessons which Conscience can give us, are reducible to Sentiment and Experience ; and what *Philo* has just now observed, is a Proof of it.

*Philo*. It is certain that the Sentiment alone has unveiled me to myself. It is the Sentiment that reproved me for want of Uprightness, as well as for want of Sincerity. When I sought for Evasions, or shifted the Question, I was very sensible that I would not see, or look'd on one side. In short, I found that I did not go straight forward ; and when I composed myself, in order to appear what I was not, I was but too well convinced that my Heart gave my Tongue the lye.

*Crito*.



*Crito.* At that rate, every Man might easily know himself. One Moment's Attention to what passes within himself, would be sufficient for letting him see how much he is disguised; and the surprizing pains we take to appear this or that, are a certain Sign of our being far from what we would appear.

*Erastus.* An Attention to what passes within one's self, is too mortifying, dear *Crito*. An Attention to the most abstract Ideas, gives us no trouble in comparison of that.

An Attention to what passes within one's self, is extremely easy to a Man, who can resolve to see himself as he really is. It requires no Dispute, no Labour of the Head. In all these respects, it is neither tiresome nor painful. It is of so simple a nature, that, in order to express it, we ought to find another Term than *Attention*; at least if by it we understand any Application of Mind.

Man, for example, is capable of Attention, in two respects, either in regard to what he feels, or to what he sees. The former is more easy, and requires no Application. The latter is more difficult; it cannot be perform'd so expeditiously, or with so little danger of Mistake.

*Crito.* I understand you, *Erastus*; and, if I am not mistaken, you mean that the Sentiment of Pain or Pleasure, Cold or Heat, for example, requires less Attention than is necessary for the Discovery of Objects, which present themselves to the sight. Attention to what we see, requires some sort of Application, at least for seeing distinctly the Diversity of Objects; whereas Attention to what we feel, is so quick and simple, that it is even unavoidable, unless the Machine is out of order, or the Application is very strong another way.

*Philo.* I believe that *Sensation*, when somewhat lively, gets the better of the strongest *Application*. How great Application soever I gave, a few Moments ago, to *Erastus's* Discourse, I was sensibly affected with the Sting of a Wasp. I should think that *Sensation* of itself awakens the Attention,

*Erastus.*

*Erastus.* It is certain, that a quick *Sensation* naturally rouses the Attention; but when *Sensation* is half stupified, by some Disorder in the Machine, the Defect in the Vivacity of the Sensation must be supplied by Attention. But, waving all Comparisons this may lead us too far, and prove a Rub in our way. What I meant by it, is that, in the generality of Mankind, the Sense of Conscience is very much blunted and stifled. Those in whom it is less active, want a greater degree of Attention for perceiving it.

This Attention renders the Sensation more nice and lively; and in proportion as it becomes so, it advises more by itself, than by the Attention given to it; or at least, this Attention is so simple, that it seems entirely natural. It must be allowed, however, that it is thus easy only to such as have already made some progress in Uprightness.

*Philo.* I see my Mistake, *Erastus*; I did not consider Men in very different Classes, in regard to Uprightness and Delicacy of *Sentiment*. I now understand that, without distinguishing the different Degrees in which they may be, in that respect, we fall into Contradictions or Confusion.

*Erastus.* Dear *Philo*, be pleased to understand likewise, that an Attention to what passes within ourselves, becomes every day more natural, as we accustom ourselves to it; and thus the Sensation is made more quick and lively.

When a Man is gone thus far, all that has the least Appearance of the *False*, is immediately reprov'd and condemned. The borrowed or superficial Intention, which covered the true one, will pass no more; or, at least, it is presently known to be false. The least Disguise we employ, to impose either on ourselves or others, is immediately thrown off by this nice Sensation. It cannot bear what has been invented for substituting all the Imagination forms, for procuring a false Repose, in the room of the Sentiments of the Heart, Uprightness, and Sincerity.

*Crilo.* I perceive that *Sentiment* is still very dull in me;  
and

and as it becomes more lively, it will make me sensible of what I have not yet perceived in several Particulars. The last thing you said, gave me an Idea of it. What you there described, passes for Religion with several; instead of being placed in the Rank of the *Falses*, it is called *Devotion*.

For my part, I was always highly pleased with myself, for rising above Bigotry or Superstition; but I find I am not yet free from several things, which are, properly speaking, only so many *Substitutions* to Reality.

*Eraſtus*. The *Falsè* of this kind is, I think, most difficultly removed, and what we deceive ourselves in the longest. This most effectually enables us to impose on ourselves, and be very well satisfied with ourselves in regard to Religion.

A Disguise of this nature is much more seducing than the coarse Disguise, by which we strive only to impose on others. Those who confine themselves to the latter, are very sensible, that, in the main, they are not very valuable.

The former, on the contrary, being ignorant of their Disguise, and taking what is only put on or *borrowed* for *Reality*, imagine themselves very worthy of Esteem. They even believe they act very honestly; and the pains they take to impose on others, seem to them no Disguise; it is a piece of well-judged Prudence for maintaining the Reputation they deserve.

*Philo*. We observed, some time ago, that the most effectual Disguise is that which is least perceived; that, by long Custom, it becomes as natural as breathing; and I am of Opinion, that nothing supports it more than what is termed *Religion*, independent of Conscience, or Uprightness in obeying its Dictates.

*Eraſtus*. It must be owned, that Religion, taken in that sense, is fit for all manner of Purposes. Men are too artful, not to make use of it as Necessity requires.

I have less regard here to the temporal Advantages to be procured by it, than to one more material and refined. I mean, a certain Repose of Conscience, at  
which

which all Men aspire, a sort of Assurance for Futurity, which removes all the Disquiets they may feel on that score. This Repose or Assurance is very necessary for enjoying the Advantages of Fortune: their Interest is not less concerned in seeking what may make them easy in their Pleasures, than in acquiring a Fortune that procures them those Pleasures.

Hence it is easily comprehended, how much all Men are interested in Religion, since it is of so universal use.

*Philo.* Is not this the Origin of all the most extravagant Religions? Should I say it is Conscience, I should fall into my old Quibbles. It must be said, that Conscience is the occasion of it; and that, in order to make it easy or silent, Men have substituted what they call Religion, in the room of the Reality it requires.

*Crito.* This is making Conscience a proper Reparation.

*Philo.* The Reparation would be easily made, if Words were sufficient for that purpose; they might outwardly repair the Damage I have done it by my former Accusations; but, as the Source of those Accusations was a secret Principle of Resistance or Opposition to Truth, I think the Reparation can be real only as far as I allow Truth to destroy that Principle, and thus become as susceptible of its Impressions, as I was before incapable of receiving them.

*Crito.* This comes up to the *Evidence*, to which Obedience to Conscience ought to lead us. If I am not mistaken, *Eraslus* meant that, by *Attention to what we see*. He thereby distinguished the Sentiment of Conscience, from the Evidence which results from it, or the Language of right Reason.

If Conscience is employ'd on the practical *False*, right Reason, without doubt, is employ'd on the Speculative.

*Eraslus.* This is what we call reuniting Subjects. But, to begin with Attention to what we see, methinks it is so cloudy, that we may expect a heavy Shower.

*Crito.*

*Crito.* And, by way of Attention to what we feel, I can tell you it is time to go to Supper.

## DIALOGUE XXIV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

*Crito.* **I** Have just now been entertain'd with a Scene, which has convinced me, that it is impossible to be judicious, without Neutrality, or an *Equilibrium*. It was acted by ingenious Men, and old Friends, but whose Interests were somewhat different.

Not to amuse you with a long Detail of what passed, you must know that *Menander*, who had been informed of their Difference, undertook to make them subscribe their own Condemnation, without seeming to have them in view. To that purpose, he introduced a Case, which, in the main, was exactly their own, though disguised.

He submitted the Examination of it to those Gentlemen, as indifferent Persons. They maturely weigh'd the Reasons on both sides, and concluded, that the Matter ought to be made up; that each of the Parties should make some Concession in favour of his Antagonist. The rest of the Company thought the Conclusion very judicious. *Menander* did not immediately apply the Case, but let the Discourse turn on other Subjects. About three Quarters of an Hour after, he laid hold of an Opportunity, which offered, of putting the two Friends on their own Affair, but in a jocular way, as speaking of what ought not to be handled seriously among Friends.

They, for some Moments, kept up the Raillery; but soon fell into the grave Strain. One of the Parties began with saying, the Question ought to be wived; that it ought not to be discussed in such good Company. The other took *Menander* aside, to tell him his Grievances. *Menander* endeavoured to make him abide by what he had pronounced on the Case proposed; but things were now quite altered, and there was no Comparison.

parifon. *Menander* then desired him to fhew him the Difference ; here my Gentleman was puzzled. After fome wretched Shifts, he look'd on his Watch, and faid he had an Appointment elfewhere.

*Menander* then attack'd the other, who put on an Air of Indifferency, faid it was not worth while, and that it was a Trifle, which would be foon adjusted ; as a Proof of which, he obferved, that they had not difcontinued their Vifits one to another. All this *Menander* granted, and added, that their Cafe was exactly the fame with what he had ftarted ; fo that nothing was fo eafy as to decide it in the fame manner. As he did not expect this Stroke, he was gravelled ; he had no mind, either to depart from his former Decifion, or retract what he had faid concerning the fmall Importance of their Difference ; he was reduced to make a Difinction between their Cafe, and that propofed. This Difinction fhew'd he had the Affair at heart, and that it was not fo inconfiderable as he pretended.

In fhort, not knowing how to get out of the Scrape, he was feized with a Shivering, which put him in apprehenfion of a Fit of the Ague ; whereupon he thought it a point of Prudence to go home immediately.

The two Persons concerned being gone, the Spectators had Matter enough before them, from the Scene that had paffed. But, as only two of the Company were neuter, the reft acted a new Scene, each fiding with the Perfon he loved beft. What they before thought very judicious in the Cafe fupposed, was now quite otherwife. Each Man faw Objects with other Eyes, not to fay with other *Glaſſes*. For my part, as I had no Inclination to enter into the Difpute, and not knowing how long it might laft, I left the Room.

*Philo.* Stories like this are not uncommon. Every one knows, that the Point of View varies very much, according as Paſſion or private Intereſt is concerned. But, I think Men reſt contented, with perceiving how ridiculous others are in the Cafe, without thinking to make their own advantage of the Obſervation.

*Eraſtus.* As long as a Man is not in the like Circumſtances,

stances, he imagines himself very far from acting on the same Principle, which produces in others such Effects as he dislikes. He is greatly pleased with himself, that he is not capable, as he thinks, of being influenced by a paltry Interest: he remembers that on such an Occasion he acted in a very different manner. This is sufficient for congratulating himself on the Fairness of his Character, and the Goodness of his Heart.

*Crito.* We should perhaps be much out in our Reasoning, if we here took the Method mentioned by *Eraustus* the other day: I mean, if we judged rather of the Effects by the Cause, than of the Cause by the Effects.

*Philo.* But how is it possible to discover a Cause, which is commonly concealed under so many good Intentions? If that is the truest Principle, which makes least noise, how shall we be able to penetrate so far, unless it be by that Attention to what passes within us, of which we were talking yesterday? I am pretty sensible that is the Point; but, at the same time, I am as sensible of the Difficulty of resolving on it, at least of entirely resolving on it, and consenting to see the inmost Recesses of our own Hearts.

*Crito.* You may add, *Philo*, that it is not less difficult to be willing to open the Eyes to those Truths which reprove us, or may carry us farther than we desire.

*Eraustus.* This last Step, though difficult in itself, ceases to be so, when once we have resolved to take the first; or rather it is a natural Consequence of it.

The Truths which we are most apprehensive of seeing, become painful to us, only by the Opposition they meet with in us: that Opposition is much more in our Will or Inclinations, than in our Ideas. Hence it is an easy Conclusion, that when we have once consented in good earnest, to discover the bottom of our Will, or Inclinations, we find no difficulty in opening our Eyes to what may reform us.

The free Consent, by which we give Conscience  
leave

leave to correct the *False* of the Will, is the same by which we allow Evidence to rectify the *False* of Ideas.

This shews the near Relation between the Language of Conscience, and that of right Reason, since the same Consent admits both.

*Crito.* And consequently, that without Uprightness of Will, or the *Equilibrium* which follows it, we cannot be judicious in all respects.

*Philo.* The Scene which you just now open'd, is a pretty good Proof of that. It appears, that in general each Man in the Company was judicious enough in the Case propos'd, as relating to Persons unknown; but, as soon as they found themselves concerned in it, some personally, others through prejudice for their Friend, the Case was altered; what was before very plain and evident, now ceased to be so. In reality, there is a wide Difference between what concerns ourselves, and what relates to another.

*Eraslus.* It appears from hence, that it is entirely in our own power to admit, or shut out Evidence, according to the Decision of our Will or Interest.

This is readily acknowledged in Civil Affairs; and if our Eyes are not good enough for seeing this Principle in ourselves, at least we see it in others. Those, for example, whose Interest has suffered from it, can remember it; nothing is so fine as the Moral Reflections they make on that Subject.

“ O Times! O Manners! (said a Person the other day, in his own Case) Where shall we find Honesty? Men stick at nothing; Conscience is laid aside. Mr. ——— knew in his Conscience, that Money was mine by Right; I desired no other Judge; I wanted some Formalities; he had them on his side; that is sufficient for stifling all Remorse, and gaining his Cause. Apply to the most judicious Man in the World, continued he, the Moment his Interest is concern'd, he loses his Judgment, and begins to perplex the most simple and evident Case.”

I admired the unfortunate Gentleman's Zeal for the Interest of Justice, and the Respect he shew'd for the Authority



Authority of Conscience; since he desired no other Judge but that of his Antagonist. I then recollected what had been said in the *Reveries*, concerning the Art of making an advantage of one's Neighbour's Conscience, while Men give themselves but little Concern about using their own. After all, nothing is so ingenious; this is making a Testimony, that interiorly corrects others, subservient to our temporal Interest.

*Crito.* It seems we are resolved to make no use of what is given us merely for our own Service.

It is certain that the Business of Conscience in Man is confined to reproving and correcting him; it never reproaches us with want of Uprightness in another. That other has within him the same Witness, who will soon make him feel him, if the Person doth not stifle all Sense of him. We are under no apprehension from another Man's Conscience, unless it be indirectly by the Obedience that other pays it; and thus gives our Conscience occasion to reproach us with the contrary Conduct.

That Case excepted, the direct Language of Conscience regards only each Man in particular. Have you had a difference with another? As soon as you enter into yourself, you feel Reproaches, not on his, but on your own being in the wrong. You may, indeed, perceive another's Fault; that falls under the Cognizance of Evidence; but Conscience or Sentiment will never reprove you for another: It's Language frequently produces the contrary Effect; it justifies to us the Person whom we unjustly condemn; shews us our Fault at large, and pleads the Cause of our Adversary.

Here Men cry up the Authority of Conscience; and endeavour to make their advantage of it; not of their own Conscience, but of that of others, so far as it indirectly concurs with their own in procuring some temporal Advantage.

This is no new Practice; we have an Instance of it in the Gospel. A certain Man, hearing our Lord speak of not setting the heart on Riches, immediately laid hold of this Opportunity of desiring him to inculcate

the Doctrine to his Brother, who refused to give him his Inheritance. Nothing could be more equitable; he ask'd no more than his Right.

*Philo.* There is no room for doubting, that Conscience indirectly concurs to the good of Civil Society; but it is probable, that those who know it only by the temporal Advantage they reap from it, will not have reason to be long pleased with it.

*Eraſtus.* They will one day be sensible that they have inverted the use of it, and that the advantage they have made of their Neighbour's Conscience, has been very inconsiderable, in comparison of the Injury they have done themselves, in despising the Language of their own. They will understand that, if the Authority of Conscience ought to regulate Civil Society; this can be done only by regulating the Conduct of each of the Persons who compose it: that if one single Person, refusing to be interiourly regulated, or made upright, should pretend to make a temporal Advantage of another, such pretended Advantage wou'd only render him more miserable.

Every one will know sooner or later for what end Conscience was given him. It is in vain to endeavour to avoid its Acquaintance at present; the pains we take to blind ourselves in that particular, speaks almost as much of it, as the Language itself, which we will not hear.

*Crito.* Might not the same be said of the pains we often take to obscure certain Truths, or evade the Force of them? The Art we are obliged to employ on that occasion, shews plainly there is a Design, and that we endeavour to get out of the reach of Evidence.

*Eraſtus.* The pains we take to stifle Sentiment and fly from Evidence, are so closely connected, that they may be consider'd as one and the same thing. They flow from the same Principle, and have the same Tendency. That Tendency is to impose on ourselves, as we were saying yesterday; and it is impossible that the Man, who endeavours to stifle Sentiment within himself, should

should not at the same time shut his Eyes against Evidence.

*Crito.* By the Rule of Contraries, I should think it might be fairly concluded from thence, that every one who admits Sentiment, thereby admits Evidence or the Language of right Reason.

*Eraſtus.* The Inference is juſt, if you mean that every one, who allows Conſcience the Liberty of correcting him, is thereby better able to form a ſound Judgment of what he ſees.

But it wou'd be a great miſtake to imagine, that the firſt Degrees of Uprightneſs are ſufficient for making a Man capable of ſeeing all things diſtinctly, and forming a ſound Judgment of every thing. You know better than I, that the Rule of Contraries doth not prove as much in the Poſitive as the Negative. For example; *I ſhut my Eyes, therefore I ſee nothing. I open them, therefore I ſee every thing.* Here now are the two Oppoſites; the firſt is ſelf-concluſive; the latter requires ſeveral Reſtrictions to make it juſt.

*Philo.* This puts me in mind of our Catechiſm on the point of View, or Evidence. I underſtand, by the comparison of the Hill \*, that Evidence muſt have an Infinity of Degrees, that the Point of View changes, that it becomes more extenſive and more exact, as we advance; and that it wou'd be in vain to attempt to open one's Eyes, for diſcovering at the foot of the Hill, what can be ſeen diſtinctly only by thoſe who are on the top of it.

*Crito.* You leave me nothing more to ſay, *Philo.* This is not civil. To let you ſee I have not forgot my Catechiſm, I add, that the Power of the Will over the Underſtanding, is much more abſolute in the Negative than in the Poſitive.

The Will may by a free and ſudden Act ſhut the Eyes againſt Evidence; but it cannot in the ſame manner make us ſee Objects diſtinctly. In order to do this, it muſt have made ſome Progreſs in Uprightneſs, by

\* See Dialogue XX.

which it enters into the first Degrees of the *Equilibrium*. This *Equilibrium* must have an Infinity of Degrees, before it becomes entire and perfect. The Degree of Evidence answers to the Degree of *Equilibrium*.

Therefore when we are arrived only at the first Degrees, Evidence must be limited in proportion; and here the point of View is far from being clear and extensive.

*Erastus*. Hence it might likewise be concluded that in a point of View thus limited, he is most judicious, who limits his Judgment the most, or judges positively only when he is obliged to come to some Choice, who even mistrusts the Judgment he forms, and is ready to correct it, as soon as he shall see things more distinctly.

*Crito*. At that rate, the best way of forming the Judgment, wou'd be not to employ it on an Infinity of Subjects, as several imagine; but rather to suspend it in regard to every thing we do not know distinctly, and confine it to what is barely necessary.

*Erastus*. Precipitation in judging of what we are not in a condition of knowing, is perhaps one of the Causes most productive of false Opinions. The generality of Mankind judge of an Infinity of things by the Eyes of others. The most sensible Part of the World know how ridiculous this Conduct is. They make a Profession of judging only of what they see clearly; but perhaps, they are not sufficiently sensible how little they are capable of seeing, what they wou'd judge of, with their own Eyes.

*Crito*. They might ask you, *Erastus*, whether you wou'd advise them to judge by other Men's Eyes

*Erastus*. A wonderful Expedient! The thing, however, is pretty common; and the Moment that a Man is supposed not able to judge for himself, he is advised in a friendly manner to stick to the Judgment of Persons of a superiour Genius.

*Crito*. But is it not cruel to leave a Man thus in suspense, without allowing him to judge either by his own Eyes or those of others?

*Erastus*:

*Erastus.* Very cruel indeed; provided this Man's Mind is as ponderous as his Body, and he is thus incapable of suspending his Judgment.

*Philo.* In reality, few People are capable of so doing; and, if I am not mistaken, the want of an *Equilibrium* contributes not a little to this Incapacity.

*Erastus.* Take notice of one thing. Those, who have already made some progress in the *Equilibrium*, and are thus more capable of judging of things, are most sensible of the necessity of suspending their Judgment, and judge as little as possible.

On the contrary, such as have not made one single step in the *Equilibrium*, and consequently can only judge falsely, will undertake to judge of every thing, and cannot come to a resolution of leaving any thing in suspense. The Propensity of their Will is too strong, not to force the Judgment.

If therefore those, who are least in a condition of judging are the most forward in judging, what weight ought to be allow'd to the Judgments of the Multitude?

*Crito.* The World is full of Judges; who, however, are continually repeating the Maxim, that *we ought not to judge*.

*Erastus.* It is no uncommon thing to find the Conduct of Men contradict their Language. But, if they wou'd be at the trouble of enquiring into the Cause of this, they wou'd learn to know themselves.

May not Mr. *Interest* have some hand in this Contradiction? What Probability is there in the Supposition? What can induce him to judge favourably of such or such Persons, but a Conformity of Inclinations and Opinions, or the Esteem they profess for you\*.

On the contrary, what could engage the same Interest to judge disadvantageously of other Men, but an Opposition of Sentiments and Inclinations, a sort of Rivalry, or a Superiority that eclipses you.

When the Question turns on Religious Affairs, how can he thrust himself in; unless it is because every Man

\* See Dialogue XXIII.

has an Interest in forming such Ideas of Religion, as will not disconcert the Plans he has laid down for his Conduct, or too much oppose his secret Inclinations; in a word, such as will not disabuse him of the favourable Opinion he entertains of himself in all respects?

And who knows but the Judgments, which Men form of Religion, may not proceed from the same Principle, as those which they form of Persons? What at first sight seems so different, may probably be one and the same thing at last.

Perhaps the same Interest, that leads us to consider Religion in a certain Light, inclines us to judge favourably of such as see it in the same View, and thus justify our Conduct and Opinions.

But, if private Interest can be the Principle that leads Men to judge of every thing, how can it engage them to speak a contrary Language in the old Maxim, *That we ought not to judge*; unless it be done with a View of securing themselves from being judged by others? When we defend an absent Person by the same Maxim, who knows but the Connection we have with that Person, and the Apprehension of being judged in our turn, may have some share in the Zeal we express for his Interest?

One thing to be observ'd is, that we insist on the Maxim of not judging only in regard to Persons, not where Religion is concern'd. In reality, every Man takes more care to shelter himself from disadvantageous Judgments, than to secure Religion against the false Judgments, which may be formed of it.

People know not, however, the close Connection that subsists between Judgments formed of Persons and those formed of Religion.

They do not comprehend that, in order to judge rightly of either, a Man must be in an *Equilibrium*: that in order to be in an *Equilibrium*, he ought to know himself, be sensible of the *False* in his Will and Inclinations, penetrate into the most secret Folds, and view the most secret Springs of his own Heart: that, till he is thoroughly acquainted with himself, he must

not flatter himself with being in an *Equilibrium*; or, if he has began to enter it, it is only in proportion to his Knowledge of the bottom of his own Intentions.

In short, Men do not understand that, while this *Equilibrium* is imperfect, he is most judicious who judges least, either in regard to Persons or Religion; or most mistrusts his Judgment. He who judges only by *Maybe's* or Possibilities in an Infinity of things: who accustoms himself to suspend his Judgment; not, barely to say he suspends it; but to suspend it really in all that is above his reach: to decide nothing interiorly on what is beyond his point of View: who says to himself, that, though things appear to him such, they are perhaps really different; and that Truth may one day shew him them in another Light.

*Philo.* This is the Secret of being judicious, with the help of but little Discernment; at least the Secret for avoiding false Judgments, is to form as few as possible, and even mistrust those we do form.

I take this Lesson to myself; and find it very proper for a Man who has gone no farther than the foot of the Hill, or the first step of the Ascent, and must consequently must have a very short point of View. Is it not equitable, that he should limit his Judgment in proportion?

*Crito.* I now see where we are. *Erastus* was saying the other day, that he had endeavour'd to make us mistrust his Arguments, only with a View of obliging us to see things with our own Eyes. But this makes me sensible that we are not yet in a condition of discovering much Ground \*. That our main Business is neither to know nor judge much of things, but to go on in the Road of Uprightness; and consequently in the Knowledge of ourselves; since, without that Knowledge, we cannot enter the *Equilibrium*; and without the *Equilibrium*, we can judge rightly of nothing.

*Philo.* That will certainly be to us the Key of Evidence, at least of that sort of Evidence which is necessary for finding our way.

\* See Dialogue XX.

*Erastus.* This distinction seems very proper. There is a sort of Evidence absolutely necessary for a Traveller, and another barely accessory.

The former is what enables us to find the straightest and shortest way to our Journey's end. The latter gives us a distinct View of the Objects on both sides of us, and enables us to give a Description of the Country.

The latter join'd to the former has its Advantages; but the former alone may be sufficient.

What doth it signify, after all, that we have Evidence concerning but few Subjects, if we have enough in regard to the Essence of the Road.

This Essence is Uprightness, an absolute Consent given to Truth for reforming us in all respects, both in our Inclinations and Ideas.

If this be our Disposition, do we run any great hazard? And if an upright Will of submitting to Truth, on any Terms, doth not attain to its End, what other Means can conduct us to the *True*?

*Philo.* On that foot, all depends on a thorough Knowledge of one's own Intentions; since Uprightness is decisive of the Security of the Road, and without that Knowledge, it is possible to mistake the *superficial good Intention*, so frequently mention'd, for an *upright Will*.

Here is abundance of work cut out, *Crito*. The Business is to search the bottom of ourselves, and judge of ourselves, not by superficial Effects, but by the hidden Causes, and most secret Springs.

*Crito.* I must own that this sort of Evidence wou'd not please me best; an entire Evidence in regard to all Subjects which fall under our Cognizance, particularly in what relates to Metaphysics, wou'd have more Charms for me. I cou'd have wish'd that *Erastus* had explain'd at large those Truths, which he has only touch'd on in his *Reveries*.

But I now perceive I am to begin at another End, and learn to discover what passes within myself, before I can discover any thing else.

*Erastus.* The Discovery of what passes within one's self, is a proper Key for introducing ourselves into a  
more



more extensive Discovery. But the Discovery of all other Subjects, without that, must necessarily be false, and calculated for deceiving.

Need this be proved otherwise, than by what we have said of the *Equilibrium*? How is it possible, without that *Equilibrium*, to attain to a just Discernment? And how shall we be assured we are in the *Equilibrium*, if we mistake ourselves?

*Philo.* Let us own, dear *Crito*, that we wou'd very fain reach the End without using the Means. It wou'd be much easier for us to expatiate without, in fine Ideas, in all that may be termed *particular Truths*, than to allow simple Truth to unveil us to ourselves, and reform us. We may shake hands upon this.

*Erastus.* Shall *Erastus* join you?

*Philo.* He is going to put himself on the level with us.

*Erastus.* And why not, *Philo*? Is it worth while to rank ourselves in different Classes, for the sake of a few *Reveries* on my side? And do you imagine that I suppose they have carried me to the top of the Hill? I assure you, I consider myself as but very little advanc'd. These *Reveries* are only the result of what I have seen imperfectly at a great distance, and in a very limited point of View.

It is my Opinion, that, without dwelling much on Particulars, we ought to travel in good earnest toward Truth. Thus we shall be better enabled to make a full Discovery of what we now see but imperfectly.

*Crito.* There is no going back in this Case; we must walk instead of *speculating*. At least, we have the satisfaction of travelling in good Company. I make no difficulty of placing myself with you; it wou'd not be proper to let Lady *Modesty* intervene here.

N. B. *The two following Letters were written while the foregoing Dialogues were in the Press; and as they were seen in Manuscript by several Persons, it cannot be supposed, that the Conjectures are an After-Thought.*

# LETTERS *concerning the* DIALOGUES.

## LETTER I.

S I R,

**I** Imagine the Dialogues will be disapproved of by several, not only Men of the World, but even some who make a Profession of Piety. Persons sincerely pious, and of but little Experience, may apprehend so pleasant a Stile favours too much of the Gaiety of the World: that Conversations, in which Raillery and Irony are so often admitted, are too contrary to that Recollection, which they wou'd never quit. There is never any danger of using too much Caution, or Distrust, of what one knows not thoroughly. But then we should not be too hasty in passing Sentence, on whatever doth not entirely suit our Taste. The most common Appearances often conceal a Fund of Truth; and the most beautiful Appearances may serve to disguise Falsehood. Such as suffer themselves to be dazzled with or startled at Appearances, can never judge uprightly.

It was by judging of things in this Point of View, that the generality of the *Jews* taxed JESUS CHRIST with being a Glutton and a Wine-bibber, while they look'd on the Scribes and Pharisees as so many Saints.

The End, which our Lord propos'd in conversing familiarly with Persons of an ill Life, sanctified what appeared irregular to the Eyes of the Pharisees, and became to them an occasion of Scandal. May not the Design of the Author of the Dialogues justify, in the same manner, what perhaps may prove an Occasion of Scandal to such as stop short at Appearances?

Our Saviour justified his View by declaring he was endeavouring to gain Sinners, not Saints. The Author of the Dialogues may justify his, by declaring he  
endeavours

endeavours to gain Men of the World, to lead them to Truth, and make them relish it by offering it to them in an agreeable Dress; and, under pretence of amusing them, bring them to what they most fear; I mean, the Knowledge of themselves. This artful Design cannot displease good Men, such as sincerely love Truth, and have nothing so much at heart as seeing it established by any possible means.

Perhaps the Author should have put an Advertisement before his Work, for preventing the Scruples of good Men, by declaring his Intentions ; but even that would probably have hindred the Effect expected from it. The Fish will never be caught, if he knows where the Bait lies.

The Beauties of the Mind, which are converted to so ill an Use in the World, come originally from God. If Nature, which is made purely for Man, displays somewhat so gay and lovely, in the Spring, shall not the Mind of Man, who is the King of Nature, have something in it still more gay and lovely ?

It certainly was at first endu'd with some such thing ; and, how deformed soever Sin may have rendered it since, it is still evident from some remaining Traces, that it alone was once in possession of more Beauties than all the Beings in the Universe.

Men's Fondness for the false Beauties of the Mind, the Care they take to clothe them with borrow'd Charms, represent what they must have had originally, and prove that they in vain seek to recover them by the Method they take.

The Mind of Man can become truly lovely only in proportion as it becomes good and upright. That Road appearing too long to those who content themselves with what may give them some ease, they chuse a shorter way. They take the Shadow for the Body, and furnish their Minds with borrow'd Beauties, which they substitute in the room of true ones. Among these Beauties is admitted all that is most charming in Pleasantry and refined Raillery : thus it is easy for them to attain to their End ; Self-Love reaps what it sowed : the

Effect cannot be unlike the Cause which produces it. The most agreeable Productions of a Mind which deviates from Truth can only support and strengthen that Deviation, both in itself and others. It often happens, that those amusing Productions are most agreeable, as they are of singular service towards making us lose sight of ourselves; as they employ the Imagination on pleasing Chimæras, they hinder us from feeling our real Evils; not to say, that such Productions are useful for disguising Evil by giving it the Appearance of Good, or at least, by shewing it in so agreeable a Dress, that the Heart has no Inclination to guard against it.

These are the ordinary Effects of those fine Compositions, where Beauty is diffused through the whole; not as an Accessory, to accompany the *True*, and serve to give it more easy entrance, but as the Essence of the Work. So that Authors of this stamp have hardly any other View than that of pleasing or acquiring Praise. Some of them may indeed aim at somewhat more real; and when an Author is happy enough to gain universal Applause, and acquire the public Approbation, he imagines that may carry him farther.

The Author of the Dialogues certainly does not flatter himself with a Success so extensive; so that it is probable his Design was not to please universally. Though his Style is gay, intermixed with frequent Raillery, and even Banter, this Banter doth not produce the Effect that would please most. Instead of helping the Reader to lose sight of himself, it is constantly employ'd in bringing him back to that tiresome Prospect; it endeavours to ridicule the false Virtues, to which the World offers Incense; and by examining them nearly, it shows the Value that ought to be set on them. This sort of Banter is so far from amusing the Imagination with agreeable Chimæras, that its Tendency is to destroy all that is merely chimerical, in order to make way for Realities, to demolish all Colourings, Compositions and fine Appearances.

This is a kind of Banter, under the Loss of which the World would be very easy; and I doubt whether the  
most

most serious Discourses, and most rigid Morality would not be less insupportable than such sort of Pleasantry. A Man must very much mistake his Interest, who offers too faithful Glasses to Persons who are resolved to see themselves handsome. It is to be feared they will be revenged on the Glass for the Deformity it discovers, or rather on him who is indiscreet enough to present the Public with such a Glass.

The Author of the Dialogues would be strangely out of his Account, if he had proposed to please and gain Applause. What then could be his View? Was it to reform Men, by shewing them how ridiculous their false Judgments and false Virtues are? If so, what is the Use of Banter, Raillery, and the ironical Strokes, which are scatter'd through the whole? Perhaps all these have their Use, and concur to that End in a shorter and more expressive manner than the most serious and pathetic Discourse.

The ironical Turn often expresses more in three Words than whole Pages in the literal way. It is perfectly in the right place, when it is employ'd in opposing the *False*, and turning it into Ridicule. The Prophets themselves have not declined the use of it. *Micaiah*, for example, when question'd by King *Abah*, ridicules both the false Will of the Prince, and that of all his Prophets, when he employs the same Language as they did. *Go up*, says he, *and prosper*. How much was here said in two Words? and how many Words would not have been necessary for expressing them in another manner?

*Elijah* employs a still more ironical Turn, when he says to the Prophets of *Baal*; *Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a Journey; or peradventure he sleepeth, &c.* There are some false Reasonings, and false Maxims, which are sufficiently shewn to be ridiculous by the bare Repetition or Imitation of them. To undertake to refute or oppose them gravely, would be not only more tedious, but even less demonstrative.

I think, Sir, that, after such Explanations, Men of  
1
true

true Piety will no longer be startled, either at the Gaiety or the bantering ironical Turn, which is diffused through the Dialogues in question. If they are otherwise disposed, as it may happen, they will at least allow others to make their own advantage of them; and let Men be taken where they can be taken; in order to bring them, if possible, to a relish of Truth and the Knowledge of themselves.

## LETTER II.

### *On the* DIALOGUES.

S I R,

I Have consulted the Author on what you tell me, that great Numbers would be scandalized at not finding in the Dialogues the Expressions used in Books of Morality, such as *Repentance, Conversion, Recollection, Prayer, &c.* Take here the Substance of his Answer.

There is an Infinity of Books written on Religion, where those Terms are employed: Such as cannot dispense with those Terms, may meet with them there: Were the Dialogues penned in the same Taste, they would be ranked among those Books, and be read only by such as make profession of Piety; and consequently, would not be a Bait for catching Men of the World; in short, they would not be a new means of making Truth relished.

Though several take the Maxim of *St. Paul* in a very bad Sense; of *becoming all things to all Men, for gaining Souls to God*; without Law *to those who are without Law, &c.* it is susceptible of a very good Meaning. In the bad Sense, it is only a Stroke of worldly Policy, the Art of pleasing the whole World. In the good one, it is an ingenious piece of Skill, inspired by Christian Charity; a Condescension for our Neighbour, whose Prejudices we do not fall on directly, in order to conduct him to Truth another way; in a word,

word, it is knowing how to take Men, where they may be taken.

The Persons, whom the Author had in view in his Dialogues, are not only such as are affrighted at all that favours of Devotion, but also Wits, as they are called; with whom Quotations from Scripture are of but little weight; or who, at least, would dispute eternally on the meaning of Terms. If Men of this sort are to be taken at all, it must be by Principles so simple and incontestable, that they cannot be denied or disown'd. When we have to do with such Men, we must lay aside Terms, and be satisfied with Ideas of the *True*. It is a great Point gained, if by giving up Terms, we can make them admit of things. This was the Design of our Author.

People of the World and Wits, openly declare they are neither *Devotees* nor *Mystics*; but are not disposed to pass for Persons void of Conscience, Uprightness, and a Love of Truth. In this Point all agree to pay Homage, in their Discourse, to Conscience, Uprightness and Truth. This, say they, is the Essence of Religion. It is granted; they are taken at their own Confession; and by leading them on gradually, they are shewn that this Uprightness, which they profess, is perhaps, not known to them in its Essence; and that, while they extol Virtue in Words, they resist it interiorly.

The Author likewise observed to me, that the Design of this Work was not so much to present Men with a System of Religion, as to let them see how little they are disposed to it, and how incapable they are of distinguishing the *True* from the *False*, for want of Uprightness or an *Equilibrium*; in short, by the *False* of their Will.

The most excellent Treatises on Religion or Piety are to several Persons what a valuable Picture would be, if presented to blind Men, who imagine themselves clear-sighted. It would be to no purpose to place such a Piece before them; the first thing to be done, is to convince them of their Blindness; to make them own their Incapacity of distinguishing Objects, and thus



work them into a Resolution of permitting themselves to be cured.

This, perhaps, is the Reason why so many religious Books produce but little effect. They do not sufficiently send Men into themselves, or refer them to the Discovery of the secret Springs, which determine their Judgments.

Here every thing has a tendency to work on Man, to unveil his most secret Motives and Intentions, his Opposition to the Impressions of the *True*; in a word, to put him into such a Disposition of Uprightness and Equity, as opens all the doors to Truth within himself.

In order to judge of the Usefulness of a Work and the Design of the Author, we ought to consider, not so much what the Work distinctly expresses, as what it leads to, and the Path it opens. Those who have a relish for Truth, independent of certain Terms, to which Men imagine it confin'd, will soon find the drift of the Dialogues; and that, without distinctly expressing several particular Truths, they give a Key to them, which may be called universal. Of this sort are the Distinctions between *simple* Truth, which is only *one*; and *distinct* Truths, which are *many*; and that between the *indirect* Testimony which the Scripture gives to Truth, and the *direct* Testimony of Truth itself in the Conscience.

Such as read them with a simple and upright Disposition, may know in general by the Effects, by the Impression they will leave behind them, what is the Spirit of the Work. If those Impressions end in displaying to their view the secret Springs of their Interior; in shewing them the Illusions and false Appearances, which they have taken for Realities; the false Opinions and Prejudices, to which they had given the Name of Truth; if they learn to judge of themselves, not by ambiguous Effects generally approved, but by the hidden Principle or Cause which produces them; if, I say, the Impressions made by this Reading have a Tendency toward producing such Effects, those who experience them, may thereby discover by what Spirit the Author

was guided, and whither that Spirit may conduct such as espouse his Maxims.

They will be able to see whether the Pleasantry, intermixed in the Dialogues, leads them to mere *Nothings*, to things even worse than Nothing; to a Forgetfulness and Mistake of themselves; the common Effect of the false Pleasantry, that reigns in the World. We have an Instance of this in the fifteenth Dialogue; the Beginning of which affords a Scene that, by the different Parts there acted, might pass for a Comedy. The Sequel of the Dialogue shews that this sort of Comedy has its Use; and that by setting the modish false Judgments and Opinions in a ridiculous Light, it may lead us to a thorough Examination of the most serious and important Subjects.

The following Dialogues afford other Scenes, of which understanding Persons will easily perceive the drift. There are whole Pages in the ironical Strain, where the Discourse seems very grave. If it be ask'd, to what purpose is all this? It is, because the three Friends, who are too well agreed on the Substance of things, to speak seriously a contrary Language, are obliged to seem to maintain the vulgar Opinions, that they may have more room to shew the *False* of them. The ironical Strain is perfectly well suited to this Design.

The Reader will not, perhaps, understand the Drift of those sorts of Catechisms, where one acts the Professor, the other the Scholar. These are introduced, for uniting, by short Questions and Answers, those Truths which had been scatter'd through the foregoing Dialogues. Such Examinations, in quality of Friends, would have been ridiculous; it was necessary in this Case, that they should assume the Titles of Professor and Scholar. Besides, this is suitable to the Character of *Eraslus*, who never plays the Doctor seriously, and laughs at himself, as soon as he catches himself at treating of any profound Subject.

It may be said, that he handles the most abstracted in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth Dialogues. True; but then he is led to them insensibly by the Objections

jections of his Friends, and delivers his Thoughts only in quality of a *Reveur*. He sometimes even laughs at himself when he is obliged to philosophize, in order to go back to the Principles of things. He pretends no more to the Title of Philosopher, than to that of Doctor. How could either of them belong to a Man, whom several suppose, and perhaps not without great reason, not so much as a Smatterer in Grammar? All he knows, say they, he has learnt only in his *Reveries*.

These same *Reveries*, having led him to philosophize, in the Dialogues last specified, bring him back to Man, and to a close view of him in the finest Springs, and deepest Roots of his Actions and Intentions.

This is the Business of the five or six last Dialogues, in which, perhaps, several will find on all hands Glasses representing them too much to the Life. If this should prove to be their Case, they may have recourse to the \* *colour'd Glasses*, which by easing them of that troublesome Prospect, will let them see themselves in another Light.

\* *An Allusion to the Fable in the seventeenth Dialogue.*





THE  
SYSTEMS  
OF THE  
ANTIENTS and MODERNS,  
RECONCILED;

By an Exposition of the different SENTI-  
MENTS of some DIVINES, concerning the  
STATE of SOULS, when separated from their  
Bodies.

IN  
FOURTEEN LETTERS.

With NOTES, and some Additional Pieces rela-  
ting to the same Subject.





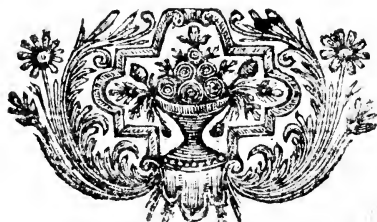
# P R E F A C E.

**T**HES E Letters, which have been thought worthy of the Attention of some judicious Persons, will, without doubt, meet with Opposition from such as are prejudiced against all Appearance of Novelty. Perhaps, even Men of Piety, on the bare View of the Title-Page, will declare the Subject of them to be curious Questions, which it is not allowable to examine or enquire deeply into. They wou'd be easily undeceived, wou'd they be at the pains of perusing them, with a Frame of Mind entirely free from Partiality. Questions of mere Curiosity have no real Tendency; they are of no Use, either for Speculation or Practice. Instead of clearing up the Difficulties or apparent Contradictions in Religion, they produce new ones.

It may here be said, that the Truth deliver'd in these Letters, are useful in both Theory and Practice, were it not more proper to leave that to the Reader's own Judgment. He will easily find that, in regard to Theory, the Tendency of the whole is to shew the Harmony of the Divine Perfections in the Work of Man's Salvation; and that in regard to Practice, the whole is calculated for proving the absolute Necessity of real and interior Sanctity; as the Opinion of an exterior Imputation which lulls so many into a false Security, is here refuted.

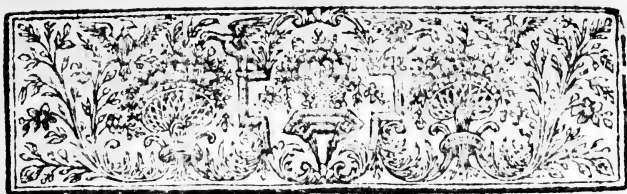
*Those, who have hitherto been at a loss for any solid Satisfaction, concerning the difference of Opinions between the antient and modern Divines \*, will certainly be pleased to find in these Letters some Explanation of so many Difficulties. If they do, the Truths contain'd in them, will stand in need of no other Apology.*

\* Concerning Predestination and Universal Grace.



T H E





# THE INTRODUCTION.

BEING

*A Dissertation concerning the Nature of the  
DIVINE GOODNESS and JUSTICE, con-  
sider'd in their Origin.*

**M**ANKIND are agreed, that the Ideas of *Goodness* and *Justice* are inseparably connected with the Idea of GOD; but our Custom of setting those Attributes in opposition to each other, is a Proof that we are Strangers to their nature.

We usually say, That *Justice* gives way to *Goodness*, or *Goodness* gives place to *Justice*; but the knowledge of the *Unity* of GOD will make this false Notion fall to the ground; and satisfy us, that the distinctions we make between the Divine Attributes proceed from the narrow limits of our Understanding, which is obliged to consider the different Parts of a *Whole* successively, not being able to fix them to a Point without being dazzled with them.

We find it easy to conceive *Goodness* distinguished from *Justice*; and hence imagine, that they are so far from being one and the same, that there is even a considerable difference betwixt them. If we survey them in  
another

another Light, and trace them up to their Origin, we shall, perhaps, find that *Goodness* is as 'twere the Center of *Justice*; the latter losing itself in the former; in a word, that the Idea of *Goodness* presents to the Mind, something more fixed and positive than the Idea of *Justice*, separately consider'd.

Let us then represent to ourselves the Infinite Being in the Eternity, prior to the existence of Time, before any Creature came out of his hands. Let us represent to ourselves, I say, the self-sufficient Being, designing to form intelligent Beings; let us suppose ourselves acquainted with this Purpose before it was put in execution: what can we presume concerning the State of those new Beings, that are to come from the hands of a perfectly happy Being, but that they will be render'd as happy, as their finite Capacities can admit of?

The Idea of *Happiness* is the only one that offers itself essentially in this Case; indeed that of *Perfection* is here also included: but this Idea of *Perfection* has something equivocal in it, whereas that of *Happiness* has nothing like it. Man aspires precisely and absolutely after *Happiness*; but after *Perfection*, only as it leads to, or makes a part of that *Happiness*.

What then must be the Origin of the *Happiness* of created Beings? It will essentially be the *Happiness* which God enjoys. The perfectly happy Being, wanting nothing for himself, cannot create Beings with a View of making an addition to his own Felicity. In forming them after his own Image, he can have no other design than that of making them happy, as he himself is; I mean, suitably to the Proportion between *Finite* and *Infinite*.

Hence it follows, that the Idea of infinite Goodness, is inseparable from that of an infinitely happy Being; and that whatever proceeds from such a Being, must necessarily partake of his *Happiness*. The pure and perfect *Good*, cannot do or confer any thing but what is good; and did it communicate any thing else, 'twould be inconsistent with itself.

This undoubtedly is the principal Idea, that offers itself to the Mind concerning the Deity, and the End he may have in view in bringing Creatures into Being; which Idea is not equivocal, but positive and unchangeable: but the same cannot be said of the Idea of *Justice*; it having nothing in it of a positive nature: so that should we suppose Creatures do not yet exist, 'tis plain we can have no distinct Idea of it.

'Tis the Existence of Creatures then, which affords the distinct Idea of *Justice*. From the first moment of their Existence, 'till they become culpable, the Notion of Rigour or Severity never enters into the Idea of *Justice*; God is acknowledged to be *Just* and *Equitable*, though he should never give Proofs of his Severity.

'Tis true indeed, we have not a very distinct Idea of the manner how *Justice* might have been exercised on, or manifested to, innocent Creatures. But, let us substitute the Term *Equity* instead of *Justice*, and we shall see that God might have shewn himself *equitable* towards the Innocent, by the equality or proportion which he might establish among them, according to the use they should make of their Liberty. I don't pretend fully to resolve this Difficulty; but it is certain, that *Equity* has always existed in God; whereas Rigour is merely accidental, and would never have been, had not Creatures deviated from their primitive Integrity.

*Equity* therefore constituting, without dispute the very Essence of Justice; I'd ask, whether infinite Goodness and perfect *Equity* don't harmoniously agree? And whether they can be set in opposition, according to the generally received Opinion?

But here, perhaps, it may be objected, "That the Nature of Goodness is always to communicate something of it's self; and yet *Equity* often requires that Men should be punished severely. In which Case, *Goodness* must needs suspend it's Effects, and give way to those of *Justice*."

I have already said, that this way of conceiving things, proceeds from the narrowness of our Understanding: but

in order to evince this, let us only call to mind the grand Principles wherein we are all agreed ; that GOD is as essentially *Good* or *Beneficent*, as he is essentially *Happy*.

From hence it follows, that boundless Goodness can never cease to will and actually do good to every Creature, as far as it is capable of receiving it. Besides (if we have a just Notion of the matter) it will likewise follow that *Equity* or *Justice* are nothing but Agents of the very same Goodness, which in the end concur to render Mankind happy.

This Idea may appear singular, 'till it is illustrated by the following Reflections. Is it not agreed, that the Deity is uniform in his *Design* ; and that this Design must be invariable, to be worthy of its Author ? If therefore the Deity has but one Design with respect to Mankind, namely, to render them happy ; why may not he make the different, nay the seemingly incompatible Means, which he shall employ, concur to the same End ? And may we not justly say, that 'tis infinite Goodness, which acts, orders and disposes of all these Events, to bring Mankind at last to their allotted Happiness.

Hence it follows, that the Effects of Sovereign Goodness are never suspended, but that we even share of them, when under what we term Correction or Punishment. Nor is this entirely incomprehensible ; we see some resemblance of it in the Chastisements, that Paternal Affection inflicts. The Application is here superfluous.

This Idea of unlimited Goodness, founded upon the Felicity of an absolutely happy Being, is easily conceived ; Men, as bad as they are, find within themselves some Traces, tho' partly defaced, that bear witness to this Truth. A Man, who has not quite extinguished common Humanity, or banished it from his Breast, were he able to produce a Set of Creatures from nothing ; such a Man, I say, when he consults himself, must always feel a Disposition to employ the whole compass of his Power to render them happy ; and did he himself enjoy  
some

some Bliss, he'd take a pleasure in making them partakers of it. I'd fain ask any Person capable of Thought and Reflection, if this is not his own way of Thinking; and, supposing he had the Power of producing Creatures, without being able to make them happy, whether he would not chuse to drop this Design, and forbear to exercise this supposed Power.

Thus the Deity, by the small Portion of Benevolence we feel in ourselves, invites us to judge how far his own immense Goodness may reach \*. What a number of Consequences might be hence deduced!

But here perhaps the following Objection may be started. "The Idea, which you have given us of Infinite Goodness, as a Consequence of God's Felicity, seems fixed and unalterable, when consider'd in it's Origin; good Sense espouses it, without the least difficulty: but when we descend to a detail of the Events, that the Deity has either ordained or permitted; when we look into what he has revealed to Men concerning their Future State, this first Idea of immense Goodness disappears; and nothing remains but a certain Idea of *Justice*, or rather *Severity* employ'd in punishing Mankind: and if there are any Traces of the supreme Goodness yet remaining, it is that of a partial Goodness, confined to an inconsiderable number of Subjects, and limited, for the greatest part of Mankind, to the short space of this Life, after which there is no room left for Hope.

"This difficulty wou'd gain additional Strength by an enumeration of a great many Events since the Creation of Man. Not to insist on this Question, *viz.* Why did not God prevent the Fall of the first Man? a much more perplexing Objection offers itself, *viz.* That God has permitted all Men from the beginning to the End of the World should spring from that miserable Stock: that these Persons who are innocent of the Transgression of their first Parents, are at their very Birth

\* St. Matthew, ch. vii. 11.

“ placed in a State of Misery: that they are wretched  
 “ before they are guilty; and that to inhance their  
 “ Misery, they are not able to avoid it, by rei-  
 “ son of a chain of corrupt Inclinations which appear  
 “ in them: for where is the Man who does not more  
 “ or less feel their fatal Effects?

“ This State of Misery would still be tolerable, were  
 “ it confined to the short Period of this Life; but to  
 “ complete the Misery, to which nothing is compara-  
 “ ble, all Men, as soon as they come into the World, are  
 “ not only laid under a necessity of suffering and dying  
 “ at last, but are also exposed to the terrible risque of  
 “ eternal Damnation; which of itself is such a fright-  
 “ ful Scene of Misery, that we find no Appearance of  
 “ Infinite Goodness here \*; even Equity and Justice  
 “ vanish; and Man seems to have reason to upbraid  
 “ the Creator for giving him Existence †.

“ What now, (continues the Objector) will become  
 “ of the grand Principles which you have laid down  
 “ and traced up to their very Source? those unchange-  
 “ able Principles of immense Goodness, which we ima-  
 “ gined to be indisputable, and of whose Effects all  
 “ created Beings are for ever to share.”

This Difficulty is so strong, that it destroys itself; it proves infinitely too much ‡; it would overthrow all Religion, whereof the Idea of God, ought to be the Basis: it would give the Lye to the voice of universal Nature, of Conscience and common Sense itself; all which unanimously conspire to bear witness to the infinite Goodness. This same Voice of common Sense does likewise teach us, that the Ideas we have of perfect Goodness, are not in

\* The Objector is supposed to build his Argument, upon the old System of the Eternity of Hell-Torments.

† To be necessarily created miserable, and to run the risque of being so for ever, is a Thought that no-body can give into; for all the Ideas of Equity we are Masters of, fly in the face of it.

‡ A Difficulty advanced against so clear a Principle, as that of the Divine Goodness, falls to the ground of its own accord; and the stronger it appears to be, we may be assured it is built upon a false Principle. Now this Difficulty depends on the Eternity of Hell-Torments; put the Case that this Supposition is groundless, then the Difficulty is removed, as will be shewn presently.

the least our Works, but must have a superiour Cause and Origin; and since Man is not this Cause and Origin, they must proceed from the Author of his Being. In consequence of which, I ask, whether it be reasonable to suspect those Traces imprinted in us by his hand in indelible Characters, or smother undoubted Evidence, to make room for Difficulties built upon Principles, that are, at least, equivocal, if not perhaps without any Foundation.

“ But here it may be again asked, How will you  
“ vindicate the Divine Goodness in a great many In-  
“ stances, that are not equivocal, and whose dismal  
“ Effects we ourselves actually feel?”

Not to enter upon a detail of numberless things, whose Springs I am unacquainted with, I'll go higher, and build on a *sure Foundation*; I judge of Uncertainties by what is certain; and that in proportion to my knowledge of it. Of which, take the following example:

I look upon the Idea of Infinite Goodness, as here described, to be a certain Principle, and make it the Basis of the Judgments I form on equivocal Effects, whose End I cannot explain.

The State wherein the first Man was placed, has nothing in it, but what perfectly corresponds with this Principle of Sovereign Goodness; but the miserable State into which he soon fell, not being prevented by the Interposition of the same Goodness, this dire Event (I say) is shocking.

I place this Event among the Effects, whose Causes are hid from me; I know not how far God ought to go in putting the Liberty, he had bestowed on Man, to the trial. Here I meet with Uncertainty and Obscurity in several respects; and therefore go back to what is *certain*, and what Uncertainty cannot shake. Hence I conclude, that one day Men will know that Infinite Goodness never was inconsistent with itself, not even in this Event, which at present they alledge makes against it.

However,

However, if we view the Matter in another light, it is easy to conceive how *Adam* being placed in a happy Situation, and freely wandring out of the way, could not but fall into *Evil*; it is just, that Man's Condition should have a Tincture of the choice he has made; and what we call Justice, if rightly understood, is nothing but a natural and unavoidable Effect of the good or bad Disposition, which he has more or less freely contracted. Goodness, always agreeing with Justice, does not oppose the natural course, which such and such Effects ought to have; and should it act thus, it must invert the Order of things, which possibly might prove to the disadvantage of Mankind: but what Goodness never fails in, is the setting all Engines to work for repairing the damage Man has done himself; this end it never loses out of sight; and makes even those dismal Effects, whose destructive cause we lament, concur in the same design.

'Tis true indeed, that nothing seems more opposite to Immense Goodness, than the wretched Condition in which all the Posterity of *Adam* are born. Here again God has not thought proper to invert the Order of Nature. He might, says one, have deprived *Adam* of Life, and created a second Man to be the Father of a happy Posterity. But do we know whether it would have been consistent with the Divine Wisdom and Goodness to have proceeded in that manner? Are we acquainted with all the Means, which the Deity has in his hands, for sooner or later more than infinitely compensating the miserable State, into which Mankind are necessarily born?

Here again we may judge of Uncertainty by what is certain. The *Uncertainty* is the Condition of Mankind in the Life to come; the *Certainty*, on one hand, is their Condition in this Life, and, on the other, the Purpose of God to render them all happy. It is certain, the design of God must be accomplished sooner or later; and since 'tis evident, that it is not accomplished in this Life, consequently, it is reserved for the Life to come. That Time which appears to us uncertain (and



(and which is so to us in some degree, with respect to Circumstances) ceases so to be in its *Issue*.

Another remark that presents it self here, is, that Man, being at his Birth placed in a State of Misery, before he could deserve it, Goodness, nay Equity it self, require that the State of Happiness for which he was created, should infallibly wait for him at the end; that his last Condition should necessarily be happy, as his first was miserable for a time, before his Liberty could be the cause of it. We may even presume, that boundless Goodness will make this transient State of Misery an Enhancement of Happiness; so that Men, having experienced pain, will be thereby susceptible of a greater degree of Bliss, than they could have been, had they not passed thro' such a State.

Without this Restoration, the Recompence would be imperfect, and not answerable to the Idea of Goodness, as we have just now established it. Men might complain, that they have necessarily suffered Ills, from which God could have secured them; or that they have not availed to render them happier at last. Here, the Danger of being eternally miserable vanishes; it is not even conceivable how such a thought has been able to enter into the Mind of Man\*: This Danger, however, is the Soul of the greatest Difficulties that can be raised against the Idea of the

\* Let us suppose a Man, who has some Idea of Infinite Goodness, but has never heard talk of a miserable Eternity; how do we imagine, such a Man would relish the first Proposal of it? What Horror would not such an Image give him? He would conclude, that those who admit of such a State, have a God different from his: that they never were acquainted with the immense Goodness of the supremely happy Being. He would even conjecture, that those who espouse this Opinion, feel not within themselves those Characters of Beneficence which are inseparable from human Nature.

In reality, this strange Opinion degrades the Divine Goodness, and places it below Human Goodness. It even supposes, that God could not foresee what would befall the Work of his own Hands; that he ventured to give Being to an infinite Number of Creatures, without any Certainty of being able to make them happy.

Infinite Goodness. This Danger not being admitted, the latter State of Man is ascertained ; and, as he was originally created for Happiness, so that Happiness does infallibly wait him. The Design of God apparently suspended for a time by the Calamities of human Life, prevails, and is fully accomplished.

It will be granted, that this Plan is worthy of God, and its End above all fully satisfactory.

But still it may be objected, “ That in order to  
 “ arrive at this happy End, there is a terrible Inter-  
 “ val ; the unavoidable Miseries of the present Life  
 “ are light, and will soon have an end ; but the ad-  
 “ ditional Prospect of future Sufferings, the end of  
 “ which we know not, is terrible. Would it not be  
 “ more worthy of Immense Goodness to exempt  
 “ Men from all manner of Punishment after this Life,  
 “ since they were formed and infallibly destined for  
 “ Bliss? Why does not that now actually happen,  
 “ which one day will certainly be brought a-  
 “ bout \* ? ”

This question amounts to the same as that concerning the Fall of the first Man ; Why did not God prevent his making that Use of his Liberty ? or rather, why did he create him a free Agent ? For a confined Liberty is no Liberty. Such Difficulties as these take their Rise from our Ignorance and our short-sighted Views of things. A Being without Liberty would no longer be Man ; and then we might ask, why God thought fit to make Men.

But, not to dwell any longer upon uncertain Speculations, let us return to a *certain* Principle. It is certain, that Infinite Goodness cannot make a present of any thing to Man but what is for his good. Since therefore it has endowed him with Liberty, and

\* How shall we reconcile Men's Ideas of the Goodness of God ? According to some, 'twould be agreeable to Infinite Goodness to exempt Men from all manner of Pain after this Life ; according to others, eternal Torments are no ways inconsistent with the very same Goodness.

this Gift might, by accident, prove prejudicial to him ; it follows necessarily, that it is in itself so essential to his Nature, that Divine Wisdom could not divest him of it, without divesting him of the Quality of Man ; we likewise clearly see, that the Good accruing to him from it must infinitely surpass the Damage he may possibly sustain from it ; without which, we may presume, that Divine Wisdom and Goodness would never have made him a present of so pernicious a nature.

I pass by all that may be said of the Advantages of Liberty. But it must be acknowledged, that how great soever they are supposed to be, if this same Liberty put Man in danger of eternal Damnation, he might justly complain of it as a fatal Gift. It is in vain to say, that without this Liberty, Man would be incapable of Happiness ; for he would certainly prefer Insensibility and even Annihilation, to a wretched Eternity, or the bare Dangers of it.<sup>†</sup> This, by the by, may shew us how full this Opinion is of insurmountable Difficulties.

I come now to the other part of the Objection. “ Does this gloomy Interval, which we see betwixt us and the reserved Bliss, agree with the Idea of Sovereign Goodness \* ? ”

I answer, That this Interval is by no means the Work of God, he has not fixed the Term of it, but has left that in our own Power ; it depends purely on ourselves to hasten on that happy Time, that State of Felicity which is already purchased for us ; there is nothing wanting, but for us to acquire a Capacity of enjoying

\* We have already observed, that God does not invert natural Order ; this would be a denial of the Wisdom which reigns in all his Works. In order to make Men actually happy, notwithstanding their inward Disorder, *Good* and *Evil* must change their Nature ; so that *Good* would not naturally make us happy, nor *Evil* naturally render us miserable. Infinite Goodness cannot set itself in opposition to this Order, without which every thing would be put in confusion. All it can do for Man, is not to abandon him in the Misery, wherein he has involved himself, and afford him the means of recovering from it.

*sure is a hint on o' y<sup>e</sup> question wholly true. Let us clear it by  
y<sup>e</sup> question to shew hearts to shew make to have been some of  
it is for a copy of being you can see to be eternally happy in eternally  
- surely, you to shew you that make of great in light in your own*

*† Add: He  
conscious  
in his own  
power to  
- vent it.*

it, and for this end to make use both of our Liberty, and all other Means that are put in our hands\*. Every thing on God's part contributes to our Assistance; he makes even the Miseries of Life, which are Consequences of the Fall of the first Man, concur to the same end†.

Here Man himself is the Disposer of his own Lot; not indeed for Eternity, but at least for a Season; that is, it is in his power to aggravate and prolong his Pain, or on the contrary to shorten it ||. The use of his Liberty determines it, and no Fate necessarily makes this Liberty hurtful to him; he is too well satisfied, that he is the Master of it; and when he would complain of this Gift of Heaven, he feels himself self-condemned.

Man, 'tis true, takes a pleasure in disputing with God, and demanding a Reason for his Conduct; God condescends to justify his Measures towards Man; he declares his Intention, and asks him, *Are not my ways equal?* Ez. xviii. 25. But Man frequently refuses to acquiesce and acknowledge the Justice of his Proceed-

\* The Liberty of Man requires, that God should make use of means to reduce him to order. Every sudden Change would annihilate the Exercise of his Liberty; should God operate directly on Man's Will, all use of Means would be superfluous. If such Changes were suited to his Nature, and were better for him than the use of indirect Means, God would be wanting in Goodness to deny him them; and Men might complain, that they have a long and painful Journey to make, which God could have freed them from, by transforming them on a sudden.

† The Miseries of Life that some undergo, being excessive, are a strong Demonstration of the Necessity of indirect Means. Would the Divine Goodness allow Men to suffer so many Calamities, if it could exempt him from them, and if those very Means did not indirectly concur to restore him to Happiness? Doth not the unequal Distribution of Happiness and Misery in this Life, give us a Glimpse of what must pass hereafter, of what they are to expect after this Life, who have made it their chief Business to enjoy the Pleasures of this World?

|| The present Life is the Season in which, by the good or bad Use of Time, we may shorten or prolong the Miseries of a future State. For we shall reap in the other World, what we have sown in this.

ings. In the Life to come, he shall yield the Cause to his Judge, *Rom. iii. 4.* and no more accuse God of being the Author of his Misery, but lay the blame at his own door.

In short, when by the Destruction of *Evil*, which has rendered him miserable, he shall become capable of the Happiness for which he was created, then he will know this Immense Goodness he so long mistook. He will acknowledge it the only Cause both of his *Being*, and of the *Felicity* he enjoys. *Justice* itself will be display'd before his Eyes as the *Agent* of *Goodness*, concurring with it in the Destruction of *Evil*; he will be convinced, that none of his Sufferings were useless, and that the Pains he has endured were either the unavoidable Consequence of the Abuse of his Liberty, or necessary Means that Divine Wisdom and Goodness have employed for reducing him to Order.

Then that Eternity, which shall succeed Time, will be essentially agreeable to the Eternity which preceded it; nor will there be any other difference, than the Existence of an infinite number of Beings that did not exist in the former; but all those Beings will be the Images of the sovereignly happy Being. They will all partake of his Bliss in the degree and measure proportioned to their several Capacities; they will rejoice at having received a Being, and perhaps even at their having experienced what Pain is. They will admire *perfect Equity* in the infinite Proportions it has established among intelligent Creatures; and the entire Compensation of the *Good* and *Bad* things of this Life, with those of the Life to come. The Idea of *Severity* will no longer enter into that of *Justice*, and *Wisdom* having answered the designs of sovereign Goodness in restoring all things to Order, God will review the *Workmanship of his Hands*, as he did in the Beginning, and pronounce it *very Good*.

## LETTER I.

*In which a Principle is laid down for understanding the Scripture, which is applicable to the Question in hand.*

*S I R.*

YOU seem'd surprized the other day, when I happened to say in Conversation, that the Doctrine of the Eternity of Hell-Torments was not so incontestable, as not to be called in question by a great number of judicious Men. To this you opposed the repeated Expressions in Scripture of *eternal Fire*, of the *Worm that never dieth*, &c. I had not then time to answer your Objections; I now enter on that Task.

First then, I am to observe to you, that the Persons who are of this Opinion, most of whom are *English* Divines, maintain that, both in the *Greek* and *Hebrew*, the terms *Eternal*, *Eternity*, and *Never*, are very equivocal, most commonly signifying a long period of Time, and sometimes an indefinite Time.

It is said, that the Slave should continue in his Master's House *for ever*.† God promises to give the Israelites the Land of Canaan *for evermore*; and Jeremy speaks of the Temple and Sacrifices as of things that *never* were to be abolished, Chap. xxxiii. 18. Lastly, God swore to David, that a Successor upon his Throne should *never* fail. In all which Cases, 'tis evident, the words *Eternal*, *Never*, and *Always*, &c. cannot be understood in a strict, literal Sense.

Let us first agree upon an incontestable Principle  
for understanding the Scriptures. It contains Truths  
which we may call *Eternal* and *Unchangeable*, which  
are the Foundation of all the rest, independent of  
Expressions, Figures, Parables, &c. Of this sort  
are the Spirituality, Eternity, Omnipotence of God,  
They may still be literally accomplished for it is  
in and from a power to who wrote in 4 days of his captivity

and whatever else we can know of his Perfections. I call them *Unchangeable*, because they are imprinted on our very Nature in such a manner, that, though the Scriptures were lost, we should not be less certain of their Truth than we are at present.

Next to these, which serve as a Foundation to all the rest, we find likewise in Scripture, God's Design of saving and sanctifying Men through his Son.

These Truths, which are the Basis and Essence of all Religion, being once laid down, you will allow, Sir, that if the Scripture abounds with a prodigious number of figurative, allegorical, equivocal, and even contradictory Expressions; that we must judge of their true Sense, not by what the words seem to import, but by those unshaken Truths that can never vary.

Thus, what I know with certainty concerning the *Spirituality* of God, hinders me from taking literally what is said in several places, of his *Eyes, Hands, Nostrils, &c.* In like manner, what I know concerning his *Sanctity*, prevents my understanding in a literal Sense those Expressions which seem to ascribe to him the Passions of *Wrath, Jealousy, Fury, and Partiality*. This Rule is applicable to a thousand places of Scripture; and would clear up abundance of Difficulties, when rightly applied.

But to return to the Opinion in question, against which you produce the Expressions of *everlasting Fire, of the Worm that never dieth, &c.* I answer, (according to the Rule I just now laid down) that when the Scripture seems to contradict itself in some Places, we must not take any thing in a literal Sense, but what perfectly agrees with undoubted and fundamental Truths.

The first of these Truths, as I just now said, are all that we know of the Divine Perfections, whether by written Revelation, or by internal Testimony stamped on the Consciences of all Men.

The Truths of the second Rank, are such as we know only by Scripture-Testimony, and yet are perfectly con-

ned with the former. Of this sort is the Declaration of GOD's purpose of giving his Son for Mankind ; a purpose which places the *Sanctity, Justice, Wisdom* and *Mercy* of GOD, in the strongest Light.

Of the same kind is that Truth, attested and so positively repeated through the whole Scripture ; that none can be admitted into perfect Bliss, unless he is cleansed *from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit*.

You understand by this time, Sir, the drift of what I have advanced. I now ask you, upon what bottom, the Proofs alledged to support the Eternity of Hell-Torments, are founded ? Why, purely upon three or four Expressions of *Eternity, the Worm that never dieth, &c.* which, as I have already observed, may be taken in different Senses.

But what are the Supports of the contrary Opinion. Those very *unchangeable Truths*, which are the *Basis* of all Religion ; and this I shall endeavour to illustrate.

GOD is *Wise, Just* and *Good* ; no one of his Attributes destroys another ; *Justice* is not opposite to *Goodness*, nor *Goodness* to *Justice*. I go one step farther, and say they are so inseparable, that we cannot so much as imagine, or suppose a Man to be *Just* unless he is *Good*, or *Good* unless he is *Just*.

In GOD, *Goodness* and *Justice* are boundless ; by his *Goodness*, he offers his Creatures all the Treasures of his Bliss ; by his *Justice* he fills with the same Treasures those who accept of them, and leaves those who refuse them, destitute of them : this is signified to us by these Words ; *All that are far from thee, shall perish*, Psal. lxxiii. And again, *Wo unto their Soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves*, Isa. iii. 9.

Divine Justice then is widely different from the Idea commonly formed of it : It is represented under the Notion of *Hatred, Vengeance, Wrath* and *Pury*, and therefore Goodness and Mercy are set in opposition to it, to prevent as it were the Effects of its rigid Severity. In reality, were *Justice* of such a nature, GOD must cease to be *Just*, whenever he exercises his *Goodness* ; or *Good* and *Merciful*, when he employs his *Justice* ;



*tice*; since it is evident that *Goodness* and *Wrath*, *Mercy* and *Revenge* can never subsist together.

But, to form a right Idea of the Nature of *Divine Justice*, we ought to conceive that it has nothing in it of threatening or severity; it is represented to us under the figure of a perfectly equal *Balance*, which inclines to one side only by the force of the weight put into one Scale. The Torments it seems to inflict upon Sinners, do not proceed from *Justice*, but from *themselves*, who lay up *Treasures of Wrath*, Rom. ii. They alone feed the *Worm*, that must gnaw them, and pile up combustible Materials for the *Fire* that must burn them; as is well expressed in the Words of the Prophets; *Isaiah* l. iii. *Walk in the Light of your Fire, and in the Sparks you have kindled*; and elsewhere, *They have lighted the Fire in my Anger, wherefore he shall be burnt in my Rage*. I might cite Thousands of Passages to prove this Truth, which of itself is well enough understood by the Conscience.

What are we to conclude from what I have advanced concerning the Nature of Justice? If this Justice is not really attended, either with Hatred, Fury or Revenge\*, but is inseparable from Infinite Goodness; can we conceive it will condemn Millions of Creatures, formed after God's Image, to dreadful and never-ending Misery; and even doom them to the Hatred of God, to Rage, to Despair, and Blasphemy for all Eternity?

Might we not rather, on the contrary, say that the chief Business of this sovereign *Justice*, is to make *just* whatever is *unjust*, and render the *crooked straight*? What is more unjust and contrary to the Views of the Creator, than that Myriads of his Creatures should for ever hate him? I ask once more, can sovereign Justice will Injustice, or permit it to subsist to all Eternity?

What I have hitherto said, ought to be consider'd only as imperfect Proofs, or as a sort of Probabilities founded on bare good Sense and the Testimony of Conscience; or, to speak more properly, on the Ideas of

\* Justice is of so different a Nature from Revenge, that a Judge who should condemn a Malefactor to Punishment, on a Principle of Revenge, would be look'd upon as a Monster.

Justice, which all of us find engraved in our Minds, and must necessarily be the Work of the Creator. From this Source we draw the Ideas of those Truths, which I call *eternal*, and *immutable*; viz. of GOD's Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; and to those he himself remits us, to determine betwixt him and us, concerning the Equity of his Conduct towards us, *Isaiab* v. *Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my Vine*; and again, *Ezek.* xviii. 29. *O house of Israel! Are not my Ways equal?* These Words suppose that the Rule, to which GOD sends all of us to measure whether his Ways are right, is right itself, being the Workmanship of his own Hand.

I should now proceed to some more positive Proofs of Holy Writ for the support of this Opinion; but as the Subject too extensive to be crowded into a single Letter, you'll permit me to defer the discussion of it, 'till my next.

## L E T T E R II.

*Wherein the Proofs taken from Scripture, concerning the Design of the Incarnation and Death of JESUS CHRIST, are propos'd.*

S I R,

**T**O satisfy your Demands, I shall here endeavour to lay down the Proofs, alledged for the support of the Opinion in question.

One of the chief of them, is drawn from the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, and the Design of his coming.

A second, from the many positive Declarations wherewith the Scriptures abound, *That God will not always chide, nor keep his Anger for ever.*

A third is taken from the numerous Prophetical Promises, agreeing with these first Proofs.

In the first place, That of the Incarnation of JESUS

SUS CHRIST seems to have great force in it, if we attend to it ever so little ; for thereby he has ennobled all Human Nature, and become the \* Brother of Mankind ; which single Thought might be sufficient to make us to presume that none of that Race, whose Nature God assum'd, shall perish eternally.

But let us enter further into the Design of this Incarnation, and consider what the Scriptures teach us upon this Subject : they every where declare, that JESUS CHRIST came to *save all Men* ; and this is repeated in almost every Page of the New Testament †. 'Tis true, that among the Divines who maintain the Eternity of Torments, those called *Particularists*, understand by *all Men*, the Elect chosen out of all Nations ; and the *Universalists*, take the Words, as a Proof that GOD offers all Men the Grace necessary for Salvation : but such Divines as deny the Eternity of Hell-Torments, and have a better Title to the denomination of *Universalists* than the former, believe that GOD, declaring his desire that *all Men should be saved*, will accomplish it in it's utmost Extent. It expresses, say they, a positive Will, which sooner or later will have it's Effect, and not a bare Wish that all Men may be saved.

Let us come to something more particular. JESUS CHRIST came to restore all things ; of which mention is made, *Acts ii*. But if he saves only a small Number, all things are so far from being restored, that there would be but a handful so favoured, whilst the multitude would continue eternally in Disorder and Desolation.

\* Though the Son of God had not made so near an Approach to Mankind, as he has done by assuming human Nature, the bare Relations between Man and the Divinity wou'd have been a very strong Proof on this Occasion. St. Paul confirms what even the *Pagans* acknowledged, that Men are not only the *Work of God*, but also *his Race*. What Consequences might not be drawn from that Expression?

† It is surprizing that this Expression of *all Men*, a thousand times repeated in Scripture, should make no Impression on the Minds of Men ; while those of *Eternity*, and *for Ever* have been receiv'd without Restriction ; though it is evident that the Words last mentioned are used in Scripture, when speaking of Things now ended.

No sooner did *Adam* fall, but the Promise of Salvation was made to him, and in him to all his Posterity, whom he represented? *St. Paul* is very express on this Subject, 1 *Cor.* xv. 22. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* This Proof is, I think, one of the strongest, by the comparison made between *Adam* and *Christ*. Therefore as it is past dispute, that in *Adam* all die, so it is unexceptionably true \* that in *Christ* all shall be made alive.

But what the Apostle subjoins is a Proof, that this will happen at very different Periods. *But every Man* (says he, v. 23.) *in his own Order: Christ the First-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.* It is plain that by this coming, he means the last Judgment; and by those that are Christ's, the Souls of the Just: Nevertheless, he afterward speaks of another future Period, which he calls the End, v. 24. *And then the End shall come, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even to the Father.* But what is this End? *That all Things should be subjected to him,* v. 28. But is it a forced or voluntary Subjection? If the former, he would never speak of it as a thing to come; because from the Foundation of the World all things are subject to him; if the latter, there is no more Hell.

What followeth, seems to prove this very clearly; *The last Enemy that shall be destroyed* (says *St. Paul*) *is Death.* Is the separation of the Soul from the Body, the *Death* here meant? No; for after the coming of *Christ*, there is no room for that *Death*. Besides, this separation is not what the Scripture calls *Death*, which is only termed *Sleep*; and particularly in this Chapter, where the Apostle never speaks of the *Dead*, but under the notion of Persons fallen asleep; but what he calls *Death*, the *great Death*, 2 *Cor.* i. 10. is a separation

\* Here the Words *all Men* cannot possibly be understood in an equivocal Sense, like the Terms *Eternity* and *for Ever*; because, if we may believe the Apostle, it is as certain that all Men shall be restored by *Christ*, as it is evident they are All become Mortal through *Adam*.

from GOD, which was the Death spoken of to *Adam*, *In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*. And without this Death, there would be no Hell; so that when it is destroyed, Hell will be no more.

Another Proof, that the Death here mentioned, is not temporal Death, is, that St. *Paul* ranks it with the Enemies of GOD, over whom JESUS CHRIST should reign 'till they were all destroyed; but temporal Death, far from being of the number of his Enemies, is an Agent of his Power employed in executing his Orders; it is the spiritual Death which is called *Enmity against GOD*, a Rebellion of the Creature against the Creator; it is this Death, I say, to which the Title of *Enemy* perfectly agrees.

Let us observe, that St. *Paul* supposes this Enemy shall subsist even after *Christ's* coming, and that he shall reign 'till, it is abolished, as well as all *Rule*, and *Authority* and *Power*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. It is evident that these Titles of *Rule*, &c. can refer only to the Power of Darkness, and the Sovereignty of the Devil; since all Earthly Dominion shall then have had an end. But what is to be the View of destroying all those Enemies? It answers an End worthy of the wise Creator, that of *reuniting to himself* all his Creatures, by a voluntary Subjection. *After having reigned over them with a Rod of Iron*, Psal. ii. *and consumed them in his Wrath; then the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to his Father, that GOD may be All and in All* \*.

These last Words seem irrefragably to prove the Abolition of Sin and Hell, and the Restoration of all the Creatures; which is further confirmed by the Exclamation of St. *Paul*, *O Death where is thy Sting? O Grave where is thy Victory?* † If *Death* and the *Grave* have

no

\* These Words would have no Sense, if Hell-Torments were eternal. God can never be *All and in All*, but by restoring the Order of things.

† We find it in other Translations, *O Hell where is thy Victory?* Common Sense should lead us to espouse this Version. We know the Scriptures promiscuously use the Words *Hell* and *Grave*; if the *Grave* signified nothing here but the Piece of Ground, where the dead

no other sting but Sin, and this sting must be destroyed; does it not hence follow, that Hell must be destroyed also? since 'tis certain, that if Sin were killed in Men, there would be no more Hell.

You'll grant, Sir, that this single Chapter would afford Arguments strong enough upon this Subject. But not to stop here, let us see whether the Scriptures do not teach the same Truth in other Places.

St. Paul, in the first of *Colossians*, declares what was the good-pleasure of GOD in sending his Son into the World. *For it pleased the Father, (says he) that in him should all Fulness dwell; that by him v. 20. he might reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in Heaven, or things on Earth.* Observe here, an *Universal Reconciliation* of all the Creatures to GOD; a Truth as well ascertain'd in *verses 15, 16, 17, 18.* In the 15th and 18th, JESUS CHRIST is called the *first-born from the dead, and the first-born of every Creature, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*; and in the 16th it is said, *That all things that were created by him, were also created for him.*

How is JESUS CHRIST the *first-born of every Creature*? He could not be so by his Divinity; for in this Sense he is not a Creature; nor by his Humanity, since an infinite number of Creatures were in being before his temporal Birth. If he is then *called the first-born of every Creature*; that Expression can signify only, that he is the *First-fruits* of them, the elder Brother; now, if the *First-fruits* are *holy, the Lump will be holy also*;

dead Body is laid, how could this Exclamation be worse placed, in which St. Paul triumphs? After bidding defiance to *Death*, what could he mean by the *Grave*? Can we distinguish one from the other, and is the Victory over this Piece of Ground such a mighty Matter? But it may be said, perhaps, this is no Solution of the Difficulty. St. Paul triumphs over the *Grave* in relation to the Resurrection; it must then give up all the inclosed Dead, as well bad as good: A wonderful Subject of Triumph! The *Grave* will restore Men their Bodies, to feel the heat of everlasting Fire. Would the Resurrection in this Case be an Advantage to the Damned, and a Subject proper for an Apostle's Exultation?

and

and if the Son, *as Heir* \* *of all things*, Heb. i. 2. *has asked all the Ends of the Earth for his Inheritance*, Psal. ii. is it not to reconcile them to GOD, by translating them from the Power of Darkness?

In the first of *Ephesians*, the same Truth is declared. v. 9, 10. mention is made of *the Mystery of the Will of GOD, which he had hitherto kept to himself*; and what is this Mystery? *To gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him*; and when will he do this? *In the dispensation of the fulness of Times*, that is to say, *When all things shall be subjected to him, and he shall be exalted above all Principalities and Powers, and Dignities and Dominions, and above every Name that is named, both in this Life and that which is to come.*

The same *Apostle*, in the 11th of the *Romans*, declares as a great Mystery, that those who before had rebelled against GOD, and been cut off because of their Unbelief, should be again grafted in, and at last obtain Mercy; to which he adds, *GOD hath concluded them all under Unbelief, that he might have Mercy on all.* After which he makes this Exclamation, wherein much more is understood than expressed, *O the depth both of the Riches and Wisdom of GOD! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?*

Let us here remark the relation these Words bear to those quoted from the 1st of *Eph.* concerning *the Will of GOD, which 'till now he had kept within his own Breast*, and which is nothing but the *thought* of a Saviour, or the design he had conceived of *Mercy to all*; which is evident from the Conclusion, *For of him, and by him, and for him are all things, &c.* †. It

\* The Psalm from whence this is taken, deserves to be quoted more at large. The Son of God is introduced declaring the Power God had given him to ask an important Favour of him, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts.* &c. What Design shall we ascribe to the Son of God in a request of such a nature?

† If whatever exists *of him and by him*, ought to be *for him*, what can

It would be easy here to quote still a great many other Passages to the same purpose, as *Heb. ii. 9.* where it is said that JESUS CHRIST *tasted Death for all Men*; and else where, *That he is made the propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.* And in the 2d of *Phil.* *That every Knee shall bow at the Name of JESUS, of things in Heaven, &c.*

I shall only dwell a little on the last Verses of the 5th of *Romans*, that are very clear in this Case; where the Apostle compares JESUS CHRIST to *Adam*, as also the Fruits we reap from each. *As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; so that Death is passed upon all Men; in like manner by the \* righteousness of one, the Gift is come upon all Men to Justification of Life.* For adds he, *As by the Disobedience of one, many, &c.*

The Word *many* in this place, undoubtedly comprehends all Mankind; *All were made Sinners* by *Adam*, therefore *all ought to be made Righteous* by JESUS CHRIST. And here we may very justly apply that excellent but abused Text: *Where Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound.* That is, the Grace of CHRIST JESUS is so abundant, that it shall at last destroy in all Mankind the Sins they inherited from *Adam*; so that *as Sin has reigned unto Death, in like manner Grace should reign by Righteousness unto Eternal Life.* As if he had said, the Reign of *Sin* and *Death* must come to an end, to make room for that of *Grace* through all Eternity.

I believe, Sir, it would be superfluous, to add more Authorities to what I have now produced; since these include the most distinct and clear Instructions deliver'd, concerning the Design of the Incarnation and Death of JESUS CHRIST.

can we think will be the final State of Man, who derived their Existence from him, and by whom alone they subsist?

\* *St. Paul* in the 15th Verse, exalts the Gift above the Offence; he observes that the Gift ought to have more influence to make us happy, than the Offence to make us miserable. If the Effects of the Offence were universal, what may we not expect from the Gift, if it ought to exceed it?



## L E T T E R    I I I.

*Wherein the Sense of the Conclusion of the Second Commandment is examined, and new Reflections concerning the Nature of Justice are drawn from it.*

S I R,

**I** Told you, that a second Argument for the Opinion in question, is taken from the express Declarations in Scripture, That GOD keeps not his Resentment for ever. I shall now enquire into the Strength of this Proof.

And here I find, toward the Conclusion of the Second Commandment, a positive Declaration of the eternal Laws of Justice and Mercy. In the first Part, God shews himself as a powerful and jealous God, punishing Iniquity to the fourth Generation ; in the last, he is represented as *exerting Mercy to thousands of Generations*. Doth not this mean, that Justice in his Punishments is restrained within certain Bounds, whereas Mercy knows no Limits?

But to this it may be objected, That if any Bounds could be set to Divine Justice, what becomes of the Infinity of God's Perfections? To which I answer, That Divine Justice, considered in itself, is without Bounds ; but that its Infinity does not consist in punishing to the same extent ; but rather in being *infinitely equitable*, entering into an infinite Detail of what can render every Creature more or less culpable, and more or less pardonable : in weighing, with a perfectly *equal* Balance, not only Actions, but particularly Intentions, Motives, Knowledge, Circumstances, Temptations ; in a word, in entering into the *infinite Proportions* of Rewards and Punishments, so that it inclines not to one side more than the other. Now, was it to punish infinitely, there must needs be a heavier weight

in the Scale of Rigour, than in that of Clemency; which cannot suit with the Idea of Justice.

*Rigour* indeed must be exercised against all Disobedience and Unrighteousness; but when by its devouring Fire, it hath entirely consumed them, *Justice* shall cease to be *rigorous*, but not cease to be *just*.

But to return to the Conclusion of the Second Commandment; I do not suppose any one pretends to take the Words literally, or imagines that God makes Children accountable for the Iniquities of their Fathers; seeing it is evident that this is only a way of speaking, which gives us to understand, that there is no manner of Proportion between the Duration of Punishments inflicted by Justice, and that of the Effects of Mercy.

But how can this Truth be reconciled with the Opinion of eternal Torments? In that case, except the small Number of the Elect, who are but a Handful in comparison of all Mankind, God would shew his Mercy to the rest, during the short Space of this Life only; after which, he would pour out upon them all the Rigour of his Vengeance, not for Thousands and Millions of Generations, which would be saying nothing, but after all those Ages are past, the Eternity of their Torments would still be to commence again.

Let us likewise consider, to what purpose Mercy should be exercised during this Life, towards these miserable Creatures; toward far greater number, who are Pagans, to give them Life, Nourishment, Cloathing, natural Light, and a Sense of Conscience. The Christians are infinitely more favoured, by being instructed in the Will of God, in all respects, who in this Life, provides them with all Means necessary to Salvation.

These, I must acknowledge, are great effects of *Mercy*, which render the latter obnoxious to Judgment and Hell, if they abuse them; but how considerable soever the Effects of Mercy may be in this Life, though it should continue a thousand or ten thousand Years, yet

it would bear no manner of proportion to an Eternity of Torments, that which is *finite*, bearing no manner of proportion to what is *infinite*; so that we must alter the Text, and say, That God shews *Mercy to the fourth*, but *vanishes to the thousandth Generation*; which indeed would be saying nothing, since any imaginable number, though equal to the Drops of the Ocean, would vanish before *endless Ages*.

I believe, Sir, I have said enough upon this Sentence of the Second Commandment, and must reserve for another Letter the Citation of some other Passages of Scripture, which confirm the same Truth.

## LETTER IV.

*Being an Analysis of the 107th Psalm, and Remarks on those Words, He will not always chide, &c. Psal. ciii.*

S I R,

THE Scriptures are so full of Declarations of the same Stamp with the Conclusion of the Second Commandment, that I am at a loss only which to chuse. To avoid being tedious, I shall confine myself to those that are most express on the Subject.

First, then, I find the whole 107th *Psalm*, which, by a kind of Allegory, sets before our Eyes a Representation of the wonderful Ways of the Divine Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy. The first Verse is as it were an Abridgment of the whole, *O give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; because his Mercy endureth for ever*. What does this Declaration teach us? That immense Goodness is not confined to the short space of this Life \*,

\* Nothing is more contrary to good Sense, than to confine the Clemency and Mercy of God to the Space of this Life, which is only the first Hour of Man's Duration. Will a different manner of existing, place him out of the reach of the effects of a Goodness which is eternally the same? Doth the Separation of the Soul from the Body make it cease to be the Work of God and such a Work as he cannot abandon?

since it endureth for ever, it must certainly be employed in the Life to come, for the benefit of such Subjects as shall be capable of receiving its Influence.

But who are those Subjects? The same *Psalms* is very express on that Article; they are such as having been Rebels against the strong God, have been humbled, mortified, and crushed by the Severity of Justice; who have felt inexpressible Anguish on the account of their Transgressions; who have been as it were *chain'd up in Darkness, bound with Affliction and Iron, and shut up within Gates of Brass; who have gone down into the Depths, and whose Souls have been melted, because of Trouble*: such, I say, having fed plentifully on the Fruit of their Works, and born the Punishment of their Sins, shall be the Objects of this Goodness, that endures for ever; *They shall cry unto the Lord in their Distress, and he will bring them out of their Trouble, and will rescue them from Darkness, and the Shadow of Death, and break their Bands in sunder.*

But whither tend all these wonderful Proceedings of Justice and Mercy? To the Accomplishment of that authentic Declaration; *Every Tongue shall give Praise to God, and celebrate the Goodness of the Lord, and his wondrous Works towards the Sons of Men.*

The Psalm ends much the same way as it began; *Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord*; as if he had said, Let them consider that this Goodness, which lasts for ever, cannot be inactive, but will be employed on the Sons of Men, in proportion as they shall be more or less disposed to receive its benign Effects.

One of the strongest Expressions against the Eternity of Torments, is this, *He will not always chide, nor keep his Anger for ever* \* : a Declaration more strong, and the further removed from Ambiguity, as it is taken from the Nature and Perfections of God himself, and

\* A Father doth not chide his Children, whom he is resolved to abandon; by chiding he shows his Design of correcting and reducing them to their Duty.

perfectly agrees with the Ideas of Justice, which every one finds engraved upon his own Mind.

We are agreed, that *unchangeable Truths* ought to be our Rule for distinguishing what is to be taken in a literal Sense; but when the Letter itself speaks in a manner conformable to those Truths, why should we not receive it in its full extent? To say that this Declaration regards none but Believers, is shuffling out of the Difficulty by a very gross Evasion. Let us therefore suppose ourselves inclined to extol the Clemency of a King towards those who had offended him, and that we should give as an Evidence of it, *That he doth not always chide, or keep his Anger for ever.* Would this signify his pardoning three or four, whilst he exercised upon Millions, all the Vengeance in his power, without ever relenting\*? Who then can imagine, when God represents himself to his Creatures, as *not always chiding, or keeping Resentment for ever*, that he only means this for the small number of the Elect, whilst he avenges himself to all Eternity on infinite numbers of his Creatures?

It remains, to make good my Engagement, that I should produce some Prophetical Promises consonant to the preceeding Proofs; give me leave to refer that Article to another Letter.

LETTER V.

*Wherein are produced the Prophetical Promises agreeing with the preceding Proofs.*

S I R,

**A**lthough I have obliged myself to produce several Sentences or Promises out of the Prophetical Books, which may serve to support the Opinion in

\* A Man who is irreconcilable, instead of passing for just, is charged with Inhumanity. Our Saviour sets no Bounds to the Mercy which the just Man ought to show to his greatest Enemies. This alone, by way of consequence, would be sufficient, even though God had not explain'd himself by positively declaring, *he will not keep his Anger for ever.*

question, I should think them almost superfluous, after the preceding Proofs. Besides, whatever Arguments may be taken from the Prophets, ought to be look'd upon as conclusive only, so far as they agree both with the *unchangeable Truths* we have laid down as our Foundation, and with the express and positive Declarations of the New Testament, that are not figurative. The Phraseology of the Prophets is so ambiguous and obscure, that unless we use the Rule which we have agreed on, and that with great Caution, we may run into a thousand Extravagancies, which we may suppose well grounded, under pretence of some Expressions, whose Meaning we do not comprehend.

I shall therefore employ the Authority of the Prophets only as collateral Testimonies that are sufficient only, as they agree with the former Evidences.

I shall not attempt to cite all the Passages that might be of service to my Argument; that would be an endless Task; but content myself with examining the Spirit and Design of some Prophetical Promises according to the Rule of *unalterable Truths*, or of such as are clearly revealed to us.

The 40th of *Isaiab* might afford some Testimony in this respect; where there is a Promise of the Restoration of all things. What else can be meant by those Expressions, That *every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain*; I say, what can be meant, but a spiritual Reparation relating to the Souls of Men?

It moreover appears, that this must be an universal Restoration, because it follows; *The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all Flesh shall see it*; as if he had said, It is the Sin and Corruption of Men, that obstruct the Manifestation of this Glory; but at last, those Obstacles being removed, *All Flesh, i. e. all Men* shall be Witnesses and Partakers thereof; which St. *John Baptist* repeats after *Isaiab*, in Terms still more express, *All Flesh* (says he) *shall see the Salvation of God*.

Now

Now every one knows, that in Scripture this way of speaking implies more than being a mere Spectator.

I know we may restrain the Meaning of those Words to something less general; and should any one dispute it with me, I'd easily give it up: but, as this Testimony by itself would be insufficient, so being ushered in by so many others, it ought not to stand for nothing.

Here is another of the same sort, *Isaiab* xlv. 23. *I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return. That unto me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear.* ver. 24. *Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength;* after which he concludes, *In the Lord shall all the Seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* Which Testimony is so much the more to be regarded, as God here makes use of the most express and ostentest repeated Oath, and as the Phrases are not very figurative. The Apostle St. Paul quotes this Text in these Words, *Rom.* ch. xiv. ver. 11. *Every Tongue shall give praise to God;* which sure cannot be applied to the Damned.

It appears likewise by this Abundance of *Righteousness* and *Strength* in God, that he gives us hereby to understand, that he is able at last to make all his Creatures *righteous*; and though he mentions none but the Posterity of *Israel*, if the Words are taken literally, yet even this will support my Argument; since it is beyond dispute, that the number of depraved *Israelites* vastly surpassed that of the Good. If therefore all *Israel*, according to the Flesh, must be saved, *Rom.* ch. ii. ver. 26. it follows, that those who have been sometime rebellious and *lopt off*, shall be again grafted in, and called to Life. And is it not in this Sense, at least partly, that our Saviour represents himself to us, as *the Deliverer of the Captives*, who rescues Prisoners from their Confinement; as a Person, *Isaiab* ix. who *brings to light those who inhabited the Regions of the Shadow of Death?* And must not this be the Meaning of these otherwise obscure Words of the Prophet *Isaiab*,

ch. xxiv. ver. 22. *They shall be gathered together, as Prisoners are gathered in the Pit, and shall be shut up in the Prison, and after many days shall they be visited.*

Having now said enough from *Isaiah*, let us see whether *Jeremiah* will furnish us with any thing to our present purpose. As he does not speak so clearly as *Isaiah*, and makes use of figurative Expressions, I shall offer only as so many Conjectures and Probabilities, whatever I observe from him.

*Jeremy*, in his 25th Chapter, makes an Enumeration of all Nations, beginning with *Jerusalem*, to which he presents, in the Name of God, the Cup of his Anger, and declares that *Jerusalem* shall drink of it first, and that all other Nations should infallibly do the same after her. Again, Chap. xlv. & seq. he addresses himself to each of those Nations in particular; and having denounced the Judgments prepared for them, he at last subjoins, *Yet will I bring again the Captivity of Moab in the latter days.* He says the same of *Egypt*, and the Children of *Ammon*. Let us now consider the Design of the Prophecy, and wave the Figure. If this Prophecy ought not to be confined to the literal Sense, but ought to be allowed a spiritual Sense, the following, in my opinion, might be given of it.

By the Nations in general, we may understand *all Mankind*, and by *Jerusalem* the Church; the Cup that she must drink of are *Afflictions*, or Operations of Divine Justice, to purify her; and this same Cup that all the other Nations shall be forced to drink of after her, are the Effects of the same Justice, which finding in them much more Matter to consume, shall therefore be infinitely more bitter.

That this is the true Sense of this Figure, we cannot well doubt, if we credit *St. Peter's* Explication of it, 1 Epist. ch. iv. ver. 17. *The Time, saith he, is come that Judgment must begin at the House of God; and if it begin first at us, what shall the End of them be that obey not the Gospel of God?* But, to return to *Jeremy*; since after he had denounced those terrible Judgments against the rebellious Nations, he promises them *Deliverance* from  
their



their *Captivity* in the latter Days; may we not understand this of a spiritual Deliverance, and that the rather, because we have not seen those Prophecies fulfilled in the literal Sense?

We come next to *Ezekiel*, in the 16th Chapter of whose Prophecy there is an Allegory that may have some relation to the Argument we are upon, though it mentions it only figuratively. Figures themselves have their own *Design*, and *Truth*, which it is of importance to discover. Here I shall endeavour once more to propose my Conjectures.

The *Jewish Church* is here represented under the Emblem of an Adulteress, who had rendered herself so culpable by her base Conduct, that *Sodom* and *Samaria* are declared less criminal than she. After the most cutting Rebukes, GOD declares he will exercise his Fury and Jealousy upon her; in short, that *she shall bear the whole Punishment of her Iniquity*; nevertheless, he afterwards promises he will remember his Covenant, and establish it with her for ever, and even with *Sodom* and *Samaria*, ver. 55. *When thy Sister Sodom, and her Daughters, shall return to their former Estate, and Samaria and her Daughter shall return to their former Estate, then thou and thy Daughters shall return to your former Estate.* Now this seems to insinuate, that the Deliverance promised to *Jerusalem* or the Church, shall one day be also extended to the most rebellious Nations, but yet with great difference in regard to Prerogatives. Ver. 61. *Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed when thou shalt receive thy Sisters, thine elder and thy younger, and I will give them unto thee for Daughters, but not by thy Covenant.* I know this may be explained of the Reception the *Jews* gave the *Gentiles*, who embraced Christianity; but, besides that those two Senses may both stand together, without destroying one another, and that the latter, which is particular, does not hinder a more universal Accomplishment; I shall not insist upon it, but propose it barely as a Conjecture.

*Ezekiel*

*Ezekiel* furnishes us with some other Testimonies, in his 36th Chapter; where having upbraided the *Israelites* with their Infidelity, he declares that GOD will judge them according to their Ways, and punish their Misdeeds; but at last, ver. 21. he promises, *That he will bring them back from their Captivity, and sprinkle clean Water upon them, and give them a new Heart, and cleanse them from all their Filthiness.* And ver. 35. *That the Land that was desolate shall become as the Garden of Eden, &c.* The 37th Chapter is full of the like Promises, as well as the End of the 39th, which concludes with these Words, *Neither will I hide my Face any more from them, when I have poured out my Spirit upon the House of Israel.*

Here it would be superfluous to quote all the Passages of the Prophets, that may relate to our Subject. I shall only mention the last Verses of the Prophet *Micah*, as less allegorical than those already cited. *After, saith he, the Land has lain desolate, because of its Inhabitants, and the People, the Flock of thine Heritage, shall be fed with thy Rod; the Nations shall see, and be confounded with all their Might, &c. They shall not run to the Lord when dismayed, and shall be afraid of the Lord our God. Who is a God like unto thee, that passes by the Transgressions of the Remnant of thy Heritage? He retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy.* Let us here observe the force of this last Sentence, which is precisely the same with that on which we have laid so much stress, viz. *That he will not keep his Anger for ever; he will, as the Prophet Micah adds, have compassion upon us, subdue our Iniquities, and cast all our Sins into the Depths of the Sea, &c.*

Here now is a plain Distinction betwixt the People of GOD, and the Nations of whom it is said, *That they shall be ashamed, and lick the Dust, &c.* However, they are here represented as running to GOD in a great Terror; which signifies, on their part, a Return; and Terror, which is not that of the Damned, which only prompts them to fly; whereas this moves them to run to the Lord.

The

The Conclusion of the 22d Psalm agrees very well with those last Words; *All the Ends of the Earth shall turn to the Lord, all the Families of the People shall fall down before thee, for the Government belongeth to the Lord, and he ruleth over the Nations; All those who go down to the Dust shall bow themselves, and none can keep alive his own Soul.* Let us likewise see the 102d Psalm, ver. 15. *Then the Heathen shall fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory.* Ver. 22. *When the People are gathered together, and the Kingdoms, to serve the Lord.* And who knows but those repeated Apostrophes and Exhortations, *Praise the Lord all ye Nations, praise him all ye People,* may be so many Prophecies, which inform us what shall at last really happen, as well as several other Passages; such as *Psal. xvi. v. 1. Sing unto the Lord, all the Earth;* and *Psal. cxlv. v. 21. Let all Flesh bless his holy Name, for ever and ever.* In a word, the last Verse of the Book of Psalms seems to conclude with a Wish to the same purpose, *Let every thing that hath Breath praise the Lord.*

I don't believe, Sir, you'll require any more Proofs upon this Subject; you may take these in what Sense you please; I only beg you'll consider there is nothing in the Sense I have put upon them, but what agrees perfectly well with *unchangeable Truths*, that is, with the Ideas we have of the Nature and Perfections of God; nor any thing but what is agreeable to the Truths clearly revealed to us, concerning the Design of the Redemption.

I don't know, Sir, whether you'll think I have acquitted myself of the Task you laid upon me. But, not to send you back to my former Letters, I shall represent them to you in one single Stroke.

The first draws its Arguments from the Nature of GOD, and the unchangeable Ideas we have of his Perfections.

The second proceeds upon the Design of the Incarnation and Death of Christ.

The third turns on the Conclusion of the Second Commandment, from whence I draw new Reflections on the Nature of Justice.

The fourth contains a sort of Paraphrase on the 107th *Pfalm*, and in particular, considers the Energy of this Declaration, *That God will not always chide.*

This needs no Summary of its Contents. If you have any Objections, Sir, to make, I shall listen to them very willingly.

## OBJECTION.

“ It is hard to conceive how a State of Blasphemy  
“ and Despair, such as that of the Damned is represen-  
“ ted, should be proper to purify and re-establish them  
“ in Virtue and Bliss.”

## AN ANSWER to the OBJECTION;

O R,

## A DISSERTATION concerning the *Nature, Origin, and Duration of Evil.*

IT is much more difficult to suppose, that *Evil* will exist eternally, than that it may have an end. Rage and Blasphemy will not purify the Damned; on the contrary, they will be restored by the Destruction of the evil Principle that causes them.

That this evil Principle may be destroyed, is a thing neither impossible nor incomprehensible; since *Evil* has not an *eternal Principle*, it is not the Production of GOD, it is a Disorder accidentally befallen his Works that disfigures them; an Incident contrary to the original Purpose of GOD, that all of them should be good. If GOD has not thought proper to hinder it for a time, will he therefore desist from his first Intention, and suffer the Workmanship in which he designed to draw a Picture of himself, to be for ever disfigured? Will he bestow on this Disorder a hidden Virtue to exist for ever? Shall we, in short, assign the Will of GOD

GOD as the Cause of the Eternity, of which it is supposed capable? No Man will venture on the Thought. It must then be found in the Nature of *Evil*, or rather in the Will of Man, which is the sole Origin of *Evil*; for *Evil* exists not of itself.

This Thesis may be supported by the Experience of what we see in this Life. GOD, it may be said, in this World wills the Destruction of Evil in Man, he spares no Means to obtain this End; but Man refuses the Good designed him by GOD; he refuses to be healed; GOD commits no Force on his Liberty; and there is reason to believe, he will not lay a Restraint on him in the next Life.

To this I answer, That there is really reason to presume, that GOD will never constrain Man's Liberty; but that there is, at the same time, a strong Probability, that the Will of Man will not obstinately persist in *Evil*. If it be asked, Why then does it happen to be so in this Life? I answer, That we must here make a distinction of no small moment.

Man can never *bate Good*, or *love Evil*, considered as such; when in this Life, he obstinately prefers *Evil* to *Good*, this only happens by the Illusion of his Senses, which present him false Goods instead of the real. He is amused with them, if not satisfied. He makes himself deaf, when he pleases, to the Rebukes of Conscience, and has even the Dexterity to lull them asleep for a time, by taking the Shadow of Virtue for its Substance. He never consents to his own Ruin, by the Determination of his Will, but so far as he is either deceived, or imposes on himself.

But in the future Life, the Case will not be the same; Man will not find Objects to amuse him, and stupify himself; he must then listen to the Reproofs of Truth, in their whole force; and will not have it in his power to deceive himself with Appearances and false Virtues. He will then see *Evil* such as it really is. He will see himself; he will be obliged to abhor himself for what Crimes he has voluntarily committed; and though possibly he may not have such a distinct view, till he has pass'd through the

confused State of Despair, Rage, and Blasphemy, as is pretended, it is highly probable, that this Rage will be turned against Man himself, more than GOD; that he will hate himself, as the only Author of his Misery, and be so far from hating the Deity, and accusing him of Injustice, as it is commonly imagined, that he will do homage to infinite Goodness and Justice.

Thus when the Wicked are introduced as speaking to the *Hills and Mountains*, they seem only to want a hiding-place, and not to accuse Divine Justice; they even give the Name of *Lamb* to their Judge. When we read in the *Revelation* of St. *John*, of Men who blaspheme the Name of GOD, for the Plagues sent upon the Earth, the Apostle speaks only of Men in this World, and consequently still in a state of Stupidity, which resembles Madness. The Scripture speaks of the State of the Damned, as of a State of *Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth*, which implies nothing against their hating themselves. Could Man but accuse GOD of Injustice, he would be comforted with the Reflection; but nothing will be so mortifying to him, as his being unable to lay the blame upon any but himself.

But may not the Deference he shall at last pay to Divine Justice, be somewhat serviceable to him, as a remote Preparation for his Removal into a less miserable State, and from thence into a better? Is there here any Impossibility, either on GOD's part or Man's? Bare good Sense approves of the Thought, and Scripture would support it by the most express Declarations, should I undertake to quote them.

Here is one Passage, among many others, *The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*. If some Men are damned past all Relief, the Work of the Devil will subsist for ever; but the Design of the Son of GOD was to destroy it: therefore, upon the above Supposition, he would fall short of what he designed.

A second not less express Testimony is, that Christ *both destroyed Death, and him that had the power of Death,*

*Death, &c.* But if there be Men who are damned to all Eternity, the Empire of Death will not be destroyed, the Sovereignty of the Devil will be far more extensive than that of JESUS CHRIST; the former would share with the latter the Prerogative of reigning eternally.

It is likewise said, *That God will contend with all Flesh, and that he will chide with Man*; but then it is added, that he will not do so *for ever*. It is no hard matter to conceive the manner of his chiding and contending; we all know, that Conscience accompanies Man even to Hell; that it serves as an *Evidence* to condemn his Conduct, and plead the Cause of GOD. Will any one here say, according to the vulgar Opinion, that it does the Office of an Executioner, and will act as such eternally? Would it be worthy of GOD to employ such an Agent, a Principle of Truth, only to torment Man, without amending or reforming him?

The Words now cited overturn an Opinion so injurious to infinite Goodness, and plainly shew us, that if GOD chides for a time, he has all along an End in view worthy of the *Father of Spirits*, who not having made *Evil*, contends with his Creatures, only in order to destroy it. Those Words of the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. lvii. ver. 16. deserve to be quoted at full length; *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the Spirit should fail before me, and the Souls which I have made.*

Such is the Purpose of GOD, and he has been pleased to declare it to us \*; though he had not made any such Declaration, we ought to have presumed it; common Sense would teach us, that *Good* having a *divine Principle*, ought to be stronger than *Evil*, which is essentially nothing but Disorder and Depravation; that *Evil* putting Man into a State of Violence, that State cannot continue for ever; that this

A Truth, dictated by common Sense itself, and confirmed by a positive Revelation from God, gains hereby a degree of Certainty nothing short of Demonstration.

State of Violence supposes its contrary in Man struggling against it, and which coming originally from GOD, cannot fail, sooner or later, to gain the Victory over *Evil*, which is the Work of Man; that GOD being the God of Order, and the undoubted Sovereign of the Universe, can never consent that Disorder and Confusion should prevail there for ever.

### OBJECTION.

“ The Author has not perhaps observed the Tendency of the Principles he lays down. Those Principles will infer no less than the Restoration of the *Devils*, who are likewise originally the Creatures of God, Beings whom God at first saw to be very good, as well as his other Works. If it is true, that all things must at last be reduced to Order, if the Eternity that shall succeed Time must be essentially agreeable to the Eternity that preceded it, then the Devils are to be restored to Bliss; since there was no wretched Creature in the former, it follows that there shall be none in the latter.”

### The ANSWER.

This Objection is so well enforced, that it alone is sufficient to establish what it seems designed to overturn. Of these two things, one must be allowed; either the Devils are in the same case with Men, or they are not: if they are not, what has been proved concerning the Restoration of Man, does not affect them; if they are essentially in the same condition, then whatever proves the Recovery of Men, at the same time proves that of the fallen Angels.

Perhaps several Persons will think this Conclusion of so dangerous a nature, that to avoid the Inconveniences thereof, they'd chuse to abandon the System of the Re-establishment of Mankind. It would certainly be very dismal to be obliged to live with such Beings for a whole Eternity, the bare meeting with them

would



would be frightful, supposing them as black as they are represented, with Horns and cloven Feet; rather than run that hazard, it were much better to knock the whole System on the head.

“ But to be serious, some may say, All Men are not capable of those panick Fears; and I am of opinion, I should not be in the least afraid of the Devils in Paradise; I could wish to see them there, and to persuade myself, at present, that the thing is possible; but cannot conceive how it should be so. How can Spirits busied in doing all manner of Harm to Man, as far as in them lies, be in a way to Restoration?”

Whoe’er you are that make this Objection, pray answer me one Question in my turn. Do you perfectly know the Nature of those Spirits to whom we give the Name of *Devils*; and are you thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of the *Evil* they strive to inflict on Men? Now, if you do not well know either of these things, as I have reason to think you do not, can you conceive *how* and after what manner they shall be restored? Can you, on this foot, determine the Impossibility thereof, because you cannot possibly, in your present Situation, comprehend it?

For my part, who frankly acknowledge my Ignorance in this matter, I have not attempted to prove positively, that the fallen Angels shall be restored; but if the Principles I have laid down for the Restoration of Man, will, by just consequence, include theirs, so let it be; I do not retract it. I am one of those who would not be affrighted at finding Devils in Heaven; or, to speak seriously, I am one of those who could not think themselves perfectly happy, did they know any Beings must be eternally miserable.

But as to this, let every one judge as he sees reason; I only intreat the Reader to observe, that Certainty can never be shaken by Uncertainty; that self-evident Principles can never be injured by a Consequence of

this sort, since the Effect of it is undoubtedly more to be desired than dreaded.

## LETTER VI.

*Wherein the Objection, That this Opinion may lead Men to Remissness and Security, is answered.*

S I R,

**I**N answer to the Difficulty you proposed in your last, I can assure you I foresaw it while I was writing my preceding Letters: *To what purpose is it, said I, to set in too clear a light Truths that may possibly encourage Licentiousness and Remissness?* Would it not be better to leave Mankind in an Error, that may be a Means to awaken their Attention, and lead them to Virtue? This Difficulty was succeeded by several Reflections, of which I shall now give you the Substance.

First then, I own that the Knowledge of this Truth is not absolutely necessary, and that we are not obliged to make it publick. We may rest satisfied with speaking of *Hell* in the Terms of Scripture, and leave every one to explain them in the Sense he likes best. However, on a right view of things, we do not find, that the Opinion of the Christian World about the Eternity of Hell-Torments, produces any very remarkable Effect, or proves a sufficient Curb to prevent their going on in wicked Courses. The fear of a violent Distemper of twenty or thirty Years continuance, would make a deeper Impression upon them.

What can be the Reason of this amazing Indifference about an Evil of so desperate a nature, which they profess to believe, and yet do nothing toward avoiding it? Among many other Causes, one of the principal is, that their Belief is not built on a right Knowledge of God and his Perfections; they only know that the Scripture speaks of an everlasting Fire, into which Divine Justice will precipitate the Wicked, there to suffer eternally.

ternally. It is true, they imagine they believe it; but see how they make themselves easy! Every one is persuaded, that he himself is not of the number of the Wicked, whose Portion shall be in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. In short, if they are not professed Highway-men, Traytors, Blasphemers, &c. they cannot conceive that God will condemn them to frightful and endless Torments. They are sensible indeed, that they are guilty of several Faults; but where is the Man without Sin? Besides, for these they ask Forgiveness daily: And what are the Merits of *Christ* good for, if they do not deliver Men from everlasting Misery?

Not only these Persons flatter themselves with Impunity, but even Sinners of the first magnitude, Traytors, and the Perjured, &c. all of them to a Man hope to escape Hell, either by repenting, as they propose to do, sooner or later; or through the infinite Mercy of GOD, that will get the better of Justice, as they speak. In reality, GOD can as easily pardon the greatest as the least Sinners, since it costs him nothing. By a single Act of his Will, he can either make a Creature happy for ever, or let him perish eternally: sure then he will not chuse the last; because this would suppose Cruelty and Revenge in an infinitely merciful and compassionate Being. Thus the more terrible Hell becomes, by supposing it eternal, every one more easily persuades himself, that Divine Mercy will exempt him from it.

At this rate, we ought to speak quite contrary to the Scriptures, and say, *That broad and wide is the Way that leadeth to Heaven, and many there be that walk in it; whereas the Gate of Hell is strait and narrow, and few there be that enter in at it.* But why do I say few, when there is scarce one so wicked as to deserve it?

Hence it is evident, that the great number of Christians, who profess the Belief of the Eternity of Hell-Torments, are so far from using it as a Motive to Holi-

ness, that it is only made a Handle to Sloth and Security. This may seem to be a Paradox; but it is no hard matter to explain it.

I have already touched on it, and shall now repeat what I have said. The greater Disproportion the Punishment Men are threatned with seems to have, either with their Crimes \*, or the Ideas they form to themselves of the Mercy of GOD, the more confidently they persuade themselves that eternal Fire will not be their Lot. But if, instead of determining the Duration of the Torments which Sinners must undergo, we should rest satisfied with telling them, *Rom. ch. ii. That there shall be Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil*; and that in so exact a Proportion, *Prov. ch. i. That every one shall bear the Punishment of his Iniquity, and shall eat the Fruit of his Works*: It would then be impossible for the Conscience of the most profligate not to acquiesce in this Judgment; nor could any one flatter himself with Impunity, under any Pretext whatever. This unchangeable Truth, *That God shall render to every Man according to his Works*, so often repeated in Scripture, is written in indelible Characters on the Consciences of all Men; every one may know by his own experience, how much more certain he is of the Truth of this Proposition, than of some hopes of Impunity, he may with difficulty endeavour to afford himself; the latter being a laborious Fabrick of his own raising; but the former he feels within himself, without contributing in the least towards it, nay even in spite of himself.

Don't you now think, Sir, when your Objection is a little more narrowly examined into, that it loses a great deal of its Strength, and is not far from dwindling into nothing. All that can be done in favour of Antiquity and Orthodoxy, would be to grant that

\* The Idea of Proportion is inseparable from that of Equity; no Proportion can be found betwixt a disorderly Life of a few Years continuance, and eternal Torments; nor is less Disproportion found betwixt such Punishment, and boundless Mercy.

there may be a sort of Equality \* between the Advantage or Disadvantage Men may reap from those different Opinions. Some will be roused by the dread of eternal Torments, whilst others will be excited by the profound and indelible Persuasion engraved on their Consciences, as well as inculcated in the Gospel, *That every one shall bear the Punishment of his Iniquity, and carry his own Burthen.* In a word, *That every one shall receive in his Body, according to what he hath done, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*

Let us suppose, if you please, that as many will be awaked to a right Sense of things, by the first Opinion, as by the last; yet I very much doubt whether the former leads as effectually to a real Conversion as the latter: because Persons in the first Case being only actuated by servile Fear, may easily rest satisfied, if they have forsaken scandalous Sins, and heinous Crimes, that put them in fear of Hell; when once they come to lead a good Life, according to the World, they fancy themselves entirely screened from eternal Damnation, so that they need not give themselves the trouble to go any farther; they are content with the lowest place in Paradise; and provided they do but escape Hell, they aspire at nothing more.

But those who are actuated by the strong Impression of this Truth, *God shall render to every Man according to his Works,* are set to work after another manner. They know that GOD cannot be mocked, and that whatever a Man *sows* that shall he *reap*; that as they have more or less employed *their Members to serve as Instru-*

\* If the Author had not told us he had made a Stretch in favour of Orthodoxy, we should have thought that he yielded too much to it, but this piece of Respect is to be excused. However, 'tis evident he could not support it long; for if we consider things rightly, we shall find, that the most frightful Ideas don't produce the greatest effects upon Men, but those that bear their own Evidence along with them, and to which common Sense is obliged to assent. Every Opinion proceeding from a false Principle destroys itself, and, which is even worse, produces a Conclusion quite contrary to what was intended. And thus the Opinion of the Eternity of Hell-Torments, is of much more use to lull Men asleep, than to awake them to their Duty.

*ments of Righteousness or Iniquity, they shall more or less reap the Fruits of the one or other.*

It must be acknowledged, that those who ever so little understand the Rules of this unchangeable Justice, have much stronger Motives for advancing in Holiness, than those who know nothing but the threatening of eternal Punishment. Here I except such as are animated by a filial Love, and with whom Fear is but an accessory Motive. I only compare one Fear with another, and say, that as long as a Man stands in need of Fear, to induce him to Obedience, and has no other Object but eternal Fire before his eyes, it may indeed make him advance some Steps whilst it continues; but it seldom happens that he doth not return to his old Courses, as soon as the Emotion is over. Whereas the other kind of Fear hath this superior advantage, that its Impressions, tho' less sensible, are deeper, and much more durable, and such as one cannot get so easily rid of, as he can of the former.

A Man who, in order to excite himself to Virtue, says to himself, that an everlasting Fire is prepared for the Impenitent, is soon freed from this Dread, by persuading himself, that he either is not one of those who deserve that Name, or that he can easily convert himself. But he who knows the Rights of Justice, cannot quiet himself thus; though he is not afraid of eternal Condemnation, he is certain, that *God will not bold the Guilty to be innocent. That he who searches the Heart, will judge every Man according to his Courses, and the Fruits of his Doings.* In short, he knows very well, to use the Prophet *Jeremiah's* Words, ch. ii. that his *own Wickedness shall correct him, and make him feel inexpressible Anguish.*

I believe, Sir, I have said more than what was necessary for answering your Objection, and that you'll own, that though it may not be absolutely necessary to inform Men upon this head, at least it is not proper to lull them asleep. I'm inclined to think, that some serious Reflections upon the Contents of this Letter, may determine you to be of opinion, that it would be of service

service to a good many People, to know these Truths to the bottom.

### *The Answer to the Sixth* LETTER.

S I R,

**I** Am perfectly well satisfied with your Answer to the Difficulty I propos'd in my last, and now see that we suffer ourselves to be surprized by specious Appearances, without considering a Subject on all sides. Your Observations have opened my Eyes, and made me see that what I formerly thought proper for confirming Men in Security, is on the contrary very capable of rousing them effectually: But, still there remains one Difficulty behind, which I intreat you to resolve. Upon the Supposition that Hell-Torments shall one day come to an end, this Hell will be no more than a State of Purification, or a sort of *Purgatory*, that borders very close upon what the Church of *Rome* supposes; an Opinion, which our Orthodox Divines have always look'd on as a groundless Fancy, and confuted by strong Arguments, with which you are not unacquainted; and, among others, by these Words: *The Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin; there is no Condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS; those who die in the Lord, rest from their Labours;* and a great many more to the same purpose. Pray, Sir, answer this Difficulty, and you will oblige him who is, &c.

## P A R T II.

## L E T T E R VII.

*Wherein the different Sentiments of Protestant and Romish Divines, concerning the State of Souls after Death, are explained.*

S I R,

**Y**OUR second Difficulty will furnish me with an Occasion of examining a Question, which might of itself very well make a separate Article; it is true, as you conclude, That if Hell is one day to have an end, what we call by that Name, will be but a State of Purification; whether it endures for a longer or shorter time, and how intense soever its Torments may be. But, this State has no manner of relation to the Purgatory of *Roman Catholics*, who make it a middle State between Heaven and Hell, and think they have as good Reasons to support this their Opinions, as our Divines believe they have to run it down as quite groundless.

I'll assure you, Sir, now we are upon this Topic, that a great many judicious Men, who do not believe the *Restoration*, I here plead for, think they have good reasons for espousing the Opinion of a *middle State*; widely different indeed from the common notion of *Purgatory*, though in some respects not unlike it. I believe, Sir, you will not be displeas'd with my making a short Enquiry into that Question; and without regarding what I have advanced in former Letters, I shall now speak, as if I supposed the Eternity of Hell-Torments. I shall begin with the different Sentiments of Divines upon this Subject.

The



The Protestants only distinguish two contrary States in the Life to come ; eternal Happiness and eternal Misery, which they call Hell ; this they represent as a State of Blasphemy, Hatred of GOD, Rage and Despair. This, according to them, is the Portion of all those who are not really converted ; or, to use their own Terms, who have not sincerely repented.

On the other hand, they are agreed that those in whom this Repentance is found, though in the very lowest degree, are admitted immediately after Death into perfect Happiness, in consideration of the Merits of Christ, notwithstanding their Sanctification is hardly begun. They acknowledge, however, that no unclean thing can see the face of GOD ; but it is probable, they suppose that such Souls are as it were metamorphosed into Holiness at the moment of their Death : but whether this sudden change is to be made in the Body or out of the Body, is what they don't pretend to determine.

Whatever becomes of the Question, this is the Opinion of Orthodox Divines concerning Souls after Death. The *Romish* Doctors distinguish three different States in the Life to come. According to them, the Saints of the first Rank, who have been purified in this Life by all kinds of Tribulation, and the exercise of the sublimest Virtues, are immediately admitted into eternal Bliss.

The Unregenerate and Impenitent, who have not the least sincere Degree of Love to GOD, are plunged into Hell for all Eternity ; but initiated Christians, nay Christians, whose Conversion is sincere, but whose Souls are not yet cleansed from all manner of Filthiness, must undergo a painful State of Purification, more or less so, according to their different Degrees of Corruption.

Hell being represented in Scripture under the Emblem of Fire, they conceive this middle State, called *Purgatory*, as a devouring Fire, in nothing different from that of Hell, but as it is of use to purify Souls ; whereas the other, say they, is an avenging Fire that

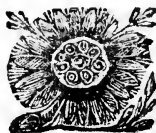
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constantly devours without consuming *Evil*, and never purifies those who are tormented by it.

To these Circumstances they add some other accidental things, to which the Vulgar give more Attention, than to the Essentials themselves; they say *Purgatory* is situated under the Earth; that its Fire is material; that it is seven times hotter than ours: that they can deliver Souls from thence, by procuring a certain number of Masses, doing of Alms, performing Pilgrimages, Vows, &c. to their Intention.

It must be acknowledged that this Idea *Purgatory*, has been so loaded with fabulous Stories, that the very Name of it is become odious; and the bare Pronunciation of the Word is sufficient for making a Man suspected of Heresy, among all such Protestants as value themselves on being Orthodox. It must be owned, that the Catholick Divines have given too much room for this Horror, by the Abuses they have suffered to creep in on this head. But it were to be wished, that our Divines had separated Truth from Falshood, and when they rejected the Abuses and groundless Conclusions deduced from this Principle, they had at the same time retain'd what is true and simple.

Sir, If you ask me which side I would chuse, I must tell you, that I would not absolutely embrace either, but pick out of each what seems to me founded on Truth. The Examination of this is of importance; I may, perhaps, attempt it in another Letter.



## L E T T E R VIII.

*Wherein is considered how we may be informed concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies, and what the Scriptures teach us on this head.*

S I R,

I Undertook in my last, to enquire what is solid in the different Opinions I then proposed ; but as we can distinguish the *False*, only by comparing it with the *True*, I shall begin with an enquiry into Truth in itself.

*First*, I shall examine by what means we may be instructed concerning the State of Souls after Death ; and then consider what the Scripture has reveal'd to us on that point.

There are but two ways whereby we can get Information, concerning the State of Souls departed ; either by the Sentiment of Conscience, and the Ideas of Justice, which GOD has stamped upon each of us ; or by the Revelation which GOD has made in the Holy Scriptures concerning it.

Conscience sufficiently convinces every one, that the Soul subsists after the dissolution of the Body, and that it is just that it should then reap the Fruits of the Good or Evil it has sown in this Life. The Scriptures every where confirm this inward Testimony, and give it a new Degree of Certainty ; for GOD alone perfectly knows what passes in the World of Spirits.

These two Methods of Instruction reciprocally illustrate each other : without Revelation the Testimony of Conscience would be too loose and confused ; and without the inward Testimony, we could not well discern the true Sense of the figurative Expressions used in Scripture about this matter. It is therefore only by comparing these two kinds of Testimony, that we can  
possibly

possibly know any thing concerning the State of Souls after this Life. Let us now see what the Scriptures teach us on this Article.

In the whole Old Testament, we find no positive Revelation concerning it; we only see there, some marks of the Hope of the Saints, who were enlightened by a Prophetical Spirit; such were *Job* and *David*; the first of whom testified it by these Words, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, &c. and the second, by some Sentences diffused through several of his *Psalms*, which yet are far less positive than those of *Job*.

In the New Testament, we find many formal Declarations concerning the Certainty of the Universal Judgment and Resurrection; Revelation is not in the least ambiguous in these two Points. The Case is not the same in regard to the State of Souls 'till the Resurrection; so that we can judge of it only by Conjectures, or rather by Consequences drawn from some certain Principles.

Let us first see what the Scriptures teach us most literally concerning it. The Parable of the wicked rich Man, informs us, that *Lazarus* was carried by the Angels into *Abraham's Bosom*, and the wicked rich Man was in Hell. St. *John* says, in the *Apocalypse*, that *those who die in the Lord rest from their Labours*; and St. *Paul* tells us, *That if the earthly House of our Tabernacle is dissolved, we have an House eternal in the Heavens*. He assures us, that the Faithful chuse to be absent from the Body, to be present with the Lord; and as to himself, that he desires to be divested of his earthly Tabernacle, to be with CHRIST. Here now, if I don't mistake it, is all that the Scriptures teach us most positively concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies; but after all, every one sees they are only general Expressions, that don't give us any distinct Notion of what passes immediately after Death; besides, they are Saints who here express their Sentiments, which proves nothing as to the rest of Mankind.

Every body knows, that Parables are not to be stretched beyond their principal Design, nor to be  
strictly

strictly taken in all their Circumstances : that therefore of the wicked Miser, I just now mentioned, tends plainly to inform us, that all things in the Life to come shall be equally compensated ; that those who are here below in Debasement and Sufferings, and make a right Improvement of their Afflictions, shall in their turn be set at rest, and exalted : whereas, on the contrary, those who have had their good things in this World, and wallow'd in Pleasures upon Earth, without any concern but that of present Enjoyments, shall be tormented in the next. And this is the Explication the Parable gives of it's self, in the Answer of *Abraham* to the wealthy Miser.

Here I expect to have my Opinion of a middle State opposed by our Saviour's Promise to the penitent Thief, which, by the by, is mere trifling ; for what Connection is there betwixt his Circumstances and those of all Mankind ? And who knows but his Purification might have been finished, as well by his repenting long before his Execution, as by a voluntary Acceptation of his Punishment ?

In reality, this Instance is so foreign to the Purpose, that it might as well be proved that all Men shall be raised twice, because the Saints who arose at our Saviour's Death, must be raised a second time at the final Resurrection.

I conclude therefore, from all that has been said, that since the Scripture only expresses itself parabolically, concerning the State of Souls separated from the Body, and not dogmatically, or by way of positive Declaration, we are not obliged to an implicit Belief in the Decisions of Divines : every one may examine for himself, whether the Scriptures contain some sure and undoubted Principle, from which he may draw Consequences for giving light to the Question : this deserves a more exact Dilquisition ; if you please, we will reserve it for another Letter.

*The Answer to the Seventh and Eighth*  
L E T T E R S.

S I R,

**T**HE shortness of your two last Letters encreases my Impatience to see the Sequel of them. I must own, I was not a little surprized upon reading of your last: for I have all my Life-time believed that the Scriptures taught as a positive Article, that Souls, as soon as they quit their Bodies, immediately appear in the Presence of GOD, there to undergo a particular Judgment; after which, the Souls of the Just are admitted into Bliss, and those of the Wicked plunged into Hell. But your Letter assures me, that the Scriptures don't explain themselves upon this head. I indeed at first looked upon your Assertion to be false, and have been at some pains in searching the Scriptures for some explicit Testimonies on my side; but all to no purpose.

In short being resolved to know the source of those Notions, which I had as firmly believed, as I now do the Existence of a GOD; I found I had learn'd them first in my Catechism, when a Child, and had been confirmed in them by reading some Controversial Writings, which all unanimously maintain the same Opinion, as an unquestionable Truth. So venerable was their common Suffrage with me, that I can assure you, I dar'd never venture to take the liberty of doubting of it.

I am now convinced of the force of the Prejudices of Childhood; and shall be more upon my guard for the future, against whatever may be derived from that Principle.

LET-

L E T T E R IX.

*Wherein certain Principles are examin'd; and from which Conclusions follow, that may illustrate the Question.*

S I R,

I N order to come to the Examination I hinted to you in my last, I shall begin with some general Reflexions, on the Nature of *Fundamental Principles*, as being the *Basis* of particular Truths.

And here, I beg you wou'd consider, that the *Principles* of things include in them all the *Consequences*; when a Principle is once well established, all the Conclusions flowing from it are so too.

The Sacred Authors have written with freedom, and without confining themselves to the Rules of Art; sometimes they draw Inferences from their own Principles; at others they lay down Principles, and leave it to the Reader's Industry, to deduce Conclusions from them.

Some Principles are more certain and indisputable than others; the formal and positive Decisions of Scripture, may be look'd upon as so many Principles; but such Decisions are not equally incontestable: Why so? Because we may be ignorant of their true Meaning.

Here I resume the distinction I made in my first Letter, betwixt *Eternal Unalterable Truths*, that are built upon the Nature of GOD and his Perfections, and *accessory or particular Truths*, which we know only by Scripture-Testimony.

I say that Principles supported by the first of these Truths, are the most indisputable; is it because things revealed by GOD are not equally certain? Not so, they are equally certain with respect to him; but we may be mistaken in the Sense we give them.

The unchangeable Truths, are these in which we are in no danger of being deceived, as being always the same,

same, after what manner soever the Scripture may express them; their Reality depends not on the Letter, which may admit of different Interpretations; even though the Letter itself was lost, they would not be less certain. We may say, *They are not become True by Revelation; but were revealed to us because they are True.*

It is now time to examine those Truths, so far as they may be of service to our Subject.

And first, I begin with GOD's design in forming Creatures after his own Image. He intended they should be *Holy* and *Happy*, by sharing of his Sanctity and Felicity; as soon as they fell from that blessed State, he omitted nothing that might restore them; this is the only end of all his Conduct towards Man from *Adam* to this day; the Law and the Gospel are only various means for bringing Men to Holiness; if GOD blesses us with all spiritual Blessings, it is, *that we may be Holy and Unblameable before him in Charity.*

This is an undoubted Principle, nor can it be shaken by alledging that GOD could have no other end in view than his own Glory; that he created us for his Glory, and sanctifies us for the same purpose. I allow all this; but was this done to acquire a Degree of Glory he had not before, or to add any thing to his own? The Thought would be absurd, because nothing can be added to what is Infinite. All that can be said is, that GOD's Glory is displayed when he does good to his Creatures, and particularly when he forms them after the Image of his own Holiness. But, the manifestation of this Glory redounds to our Benefit, not to his.

It will therefore be eternally true, that all the ways of GOD towards Men, tend only to their Sanctification.

But secondly, why does GOD do so much for the Sanctification of Men? Pure Charity is his only Motive, because they cannot be united to him without being holy, and without this Union, it is impossible they should be happy; *Holiness* and *Happiness* being inseparable.



separable. Here now is another Principle, that deserves our Consideration ; I shall explain myself.

Holiness is not an arbitrary Condition that GOD has imposed on Men, in order to give them the Enjoyment of heavenly Bliss, as if he might indifferently have laid upon them any other. It is an essential Condition necessary to Happiness ; as a right Disposition of all the Members is requisite to the Health of the Body. It was therefore well said, *That the Health of the Soul is nothing but Holiness.* Upon this Principle the *English* Divines have maintained, that even a Mansion in Paradise could not make an un sanctified Soul happy.

From this Principle a third follows ; that the Promises and Menaces made by GOD to Men, are not, properly speaking, a formed Design of rewarding, or punishing them according as they shall, or shall not comply with the Conditions required. No ; it is a bare Declaration of what will happen to every one, by the very nature of things, according to the choice he shall make ; as if a Husbandman when sowing his Field was told, that as he sowed good or bad Grain, he shall reap either the one or the other. On this Principle, *St. Paul, Galat. ch. v.* makes that remarkable Declaration ; *Be not deceived, (says he) GOD is not mocked ; for what a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

From this Principle, we may draw an Inference, on which I touched in my first Letters ; that, properly speaking, GOD does not inflict Sufferings on Men, but leaves them to reap the Fruits of what they have sown. GOD never avenges himself ; he is neither wrathful nor furious, as commonly represented ; being pure Goodness and the Source of all Happiness, he can give only what he himself possesseth ; and although the Scriptures make use of ambiguous Expressions, that seem to suppose he avengeth himself, is provoked, and inflicts severe Punishments on his Creatures ; in these and the like Cases, we are to make use of the unalterable Ideas, we have of his Nature and Perfections, and give them the Preference to the Letter.

These Principles being laid down, which no Man of Sense will dispute, I shall, with their assistance, examine the different Opinions of Divines, beginning with those of the Church of *Rome*.

The distinction they make of a middle State, between Eternal Happiness and Eternal Damnation, is not entirely groundless; it is supported by our second Principle, *viz. That without perfect Holiness a Soul cannot be re-united to G O D*, and consequently be *completely happy*. Now, as but very few arrive to Purity of Heart in this Life, they suppose that those whose Sanctification is begun, but interrupted by Death, will not for that reason be excluded from Happiness, but that the Enjoyment of it shall be deferr'd, 'till they are cleansed from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit. This is what seems most probable in the Doctrine of the *Roman Catholics* upon this head; but it must be owned, there are very few, if any of that Communion, whose Ideas are so refined on this Article; they look upon this middle State, called *Purgatory*, as a Payment made by Men to Divine Justice, by a certain Measure of Sufferings undergone, 'till it is satisfied. This, is the commonly received Notion of Purgatory among them; the Vulgar add abundance of other Absurdities, too well known to be here repeated.

Let us now come to the Protestant Divines. It is not without some reason that they reject these Suppositions; In Reality, this is to suppose that the Justice of G O D exacts of Men satisfaction to its demands by their Sufferings; that it is susceptible of Wrath, and can be appeased only by Torments; that actual Sins, which they pretend are expiated hereby, are all the Evil with which the Soul is infected. This is confounding the Acts of Corruption, with Corruption itself.

The Protestant Divines therefore have reason to reject the Idea of such a *Purgatory*, but they have not so much reason on their side, when they positively determine; *That there is no Medium between Eternal Happiness and Eternal Damnation*. This deserves some farther Reflection.

To distinguish in the Life to come, only two Classes at an infinite distance from each other, such as those of Heaven and Hell, is to suppose that all be ranked only in two Classes, in regard to their Dispositions that they are all, without exception, either in the highest pitch of *Holiness*, or the greatest height of *Depravity*: (for it is an invariable Rule of Justice, that every one should be happy or miserable, according to his good or bad Dispositions, and this in an exact Proportion.) But this Supposition is so visibly false, that it does not deserve to be confuted. Every reasonable Person will own, that from the most *Wicked* to the most *Holy*, there are infinite Degrees. May it not be said, that there are, perhaps, as many different Degrees as there are different Creatures?

Hence it follows, that between the two Extremes, there will be an infinite Number who will be found more or less Good, and more or less Wicked, with such diversity as is beyond description. In some, *Good* will prevail over *Evil*; in others, *Evil* over *Good*; in several, *Good* and *Evil* will be confounded, or as it were equally ballanced; and the different advantageous or disadvantageous Circumstances, each Person shall be in, will infinitely diversify the Degree of *Good* or *Evil*.

I now return to our second Principle, and say, that if it is true, *That the measure of Holiness constitutes the measure of Bliss*; the Persons therefore, of whom I have just now been speaking, being neither perfectly Holy, nor compleatly Wicked, will, for this very reason, neither be absolutely happy, nor desperately miserable.

Upon this Principle, those in whom *Good* shall prevail over *Evil*, will be more happy than miserable; and those in whom *Evil* shall have the ascendant, will have a larger share of Misery than Happiness; and those, in whom *Good* and *Evil* are equally poised, must sustain terrible Combats, 'till *Good* has got the better of it's Adversary.

Upon this foot, the three Classes just now mentioned, although different from one another, will however constitute a Medium between the greatest Hap-

piness and most exquisite Misery ; which is all that is intended by the *middle State* now under consideration.

The Consequence is so natural, and so evidently results from the very Principles of the Orthodox, that I am at a loss how they can elude the force of it ; for by their own Confession, no Man can see the Lord without Sanctification ; and, as is further acknowledged, there is scarce a Person to be found, whose Sanctification is finished in this Life, it follows, that it must be completed in the Life to come.

But here, perhaps, they may think to retort the Argument, by supposing Sanctification being begun, though in the lowest degree, is finished in an Instant by a kind of Metamorphosis, when the Soul is separated from the Body.

I'd fain ask these Gentlemen, how they came by this Idea ; whether they take it from some *Decisions of Scripture*, from the Sentiments of Conscience, or from their own Experience.

It would be superfluous to prove that Experience cannot be admitted in the present Case. I acknowledge, I should be surprized to see a decision of this sort in Scripture. As to Conscience, it is so far from having the least Inclination to espouse this Opinion, that it constantly declares against it ; and in spite of the violent Propensity every Man has to what flatters him, in spite of all the Authorities alledged to persuade him of its Reality, Conscience tacitly gives the lye to those deceitful Assurances, especially when any imminent danger threatens approaching Death.

Let us therefore agree, that this Opinion of a Metamorphosis or sudden Transformation, is harder to be proved than supposed.

But, says some Divine of a different Opinion, “ I do  
 “ not suppose this pretended Change, and maintain  
 “ it is not necessary ; because GOD does not look  
 “ upon an imperfect Soul in its self, but in his own  
 “ well-beloved Son ; he covers all its Spots with the  
 “ Robe of his Righteousness. And though it is very  
 “ far

“ far from being holy, he regards it as such by the Imputation of Christ’s Merits.”

This I must own is a very short way. But the Question is, whether this System be founded on the *True*, or not; the Scripture-Phrases that seem to support it, are too ambiguous to be allow’d as Proofs; they prove too much, and therefore prove nothing.

If they prove that the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, and the Imputation of his Justice excuse Men from sanctifying themselves, because GOD considers them not in themselves, they prove too much. On that foot, our first Principle wou’d be false, *That all the ways of GOD toward Men tend only to sanctify them.* If it be allowed that they prove nothing like this, the necessity of Sanctification remains untouched, and consequently nothing is proved.

Let us go one step farther: Were it possible for a Soul, full of bad Inclinations, to be saved, without any real Change wrought in it, it would be saved without being holy; it would indeed be reputed holy by Imputation, but would not be really so. What wou’d follow from this? Two manifest Absurdities.

*First*, That we might be numbered among the *Blessed*, though we were never in the list of Saints; and then our second Principle would be false, *viz. That Holiness and Happiness are inseparable.*

*Secondly*, That Paradise, which ought to be the Mansion of Truth and Reality, would be only the abode of Appearance and Illusion; GOD would no longer judge of things as they really are; he would not repute a Man *just*, who is really *unjust*; and *Spiritual*, who is really *Carnal*; and the Contradiction would be solved by this ingenious mental Reservation, “ That JESUS CHRIST the Righteous imputes unto them his Righteousness, and that GOD does not look upon them as they are in themselves.”

Does GOD deal in bare Words and Subterfuges? and is it not more true to say, that he doth not hold the Guilty innocent?

But I have already said more than was necessary for confuting an Opinion so ill-grounded. I should think I called your Judgment in question, should I say any more upon the Subject ; allow me to leave the rest to your own Reflection.

### *An Answer to the Ninth* LETTER.

S I R,

**Y**OUR last has opened my Eyes to Truths I had never before consider'd ; I had till now thought, that in order to maintain the Opinion of a middle State, we ought to have recourse to groundless Hypotheses ; but I now find that, on the contrary, those who deny it, are reduc'd to Suppositions without Proof. Such are that of a sudden change at the hour of Death, and that of an Imputation of Righteousness, which dispenses with actual Sanctification. The last mentioned, is not only void of Proof, but the bare mention of it is sufficient for shewing its Falshood. It is surprising that we grow old in our Attachment to Opinions never thoroughly examined, and the Consequences of which are not so much as perceived.

I now comprehend, that whatever Method we take, it is very difficult to elude the Opinion of Purification ; whether we suppose the Eternity of Hell-Torments, or that they are to have an end : if the latter, this Hell will itself be only a State of Purification for Souls ; if, on the other hand, we stick to the Opinion of the Orthodox concerning the endless duration of Hell-Torments, there is still greater reason to espouse a middle State : for without that, they must suppose the eternal Destruction of an infinite number of Creatures, who have not been able to complete their Sanctification in this Life, though they had entered on it.

I shall not therefore, Sir, ask any more Proofs of the Opinion delivered in your former Letters ; the Principles you have laid down, have prevented all the Objections I might have made. I perceive, that if I advance  
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the grand Argument of the Orthodox against you, viz. *That the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanse us from all Sin*: You have answered it, by your first and second Principles.

The first is, *That all the ways of GOD towards Men, tend only to make them holy*; therefore the Blood of our Saviour was not shed to dispense with Sanctification; but to lead us to it.

The second, *That Holiness and Happiness are inseparable*; if so, it follows, that the Blood of JESUS CHRIST ought to cleanse us really, and not by a bare Imputation, since without real Holiness we can never be really happy.

Thus, Sir, I apply your Principles to the Objections that may be offer'd against your Doctrine: I don't know whether I enter rightly into your way of thinking.

Permit me to propose two other Difficulties. *First*, If Hell is only a State of Purification, then, properly speaking, there will be no Hell at all.

*Second'y*, Upon your Hypothesis, the Souls of the Wicked would be placed with those of the Just; and what Fellowship hath Unrighteousness with Righteousness? Can it be imagined that the sincerely Pious, though not absolutely holy, will be ranked with the vilest Sinners, hardened in all manner of Vice?

Pray, Sir, be so good as to clear up these Difficulties, &c.



## L E T T E R X.

*A more accurate Enquiry, in what Sense it is true, That the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin.*

S I R,

**I** Think you make a very just Application of the Principles we have laid down, to the Objections usually made to the Doctrine of Purification. The passage of St. *John*, which you say may be urged against this Opinion, wou'd be more proper for establishing it, whether it be consider'd in itself, or as it stands connected with the preceding and following Words: *The Blood of CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin.* When we say *cleanseth*, we do not barely say *absolves*, *discharges* from Punishment, much less *dispenses* with Purification from Sin. This would be an evident Contradiction, and would make St. *John* assert that the Blood of Christ cleanseth us, without cleansing us; just as if we should say of an able Physician, that he cures all kinds of Diseases by a Certificate of Health, though he cured none. Should we be satisfied to be cured after this manner?

Let us now determine what is meant by *the Blood of JESUS CHRIST*; it cannot be understood of his material Blood; it is, they will say, the Merit of his Blood or Death. Agreed: but what has he merited for us by it? Is it an Exemption from Sanctity, or the Spirit of Sanctification? If the latter, its Operations must really produce Holiness in our Souls; but cleansing and sanctifying are one and the same thing.

Might we not, to avoid all ambiguity, understand the Words thus; *The Spirit, which JESUS CHRIST has merited for us by his Blood, purifieth us from all Sin*; that this is the true meaning of them, will be the more evident, if we consider the preceding Verse, and the general Design of the whole Chapter, 1 *Epist. St. John* i.

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The Apostle here lays down a Principle, from which he himself draws the Consequence: The Principle is this; *G O D is Light, and in him is no Darknefs*: then follows the Consequence, first negatively expressed; *If we say, we have Communion with him, and walk in Darknefs, we are Lyars*: and then positively in these Words; *But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, we have Communion one with another, and the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin*. This Purification therefore, doth not dispense with our walking in the Light, since by that we are brought to it, and become the Children of Light.

It is needless here to determine the Sense of the Terms *Light* and *Darknefs*; we easily conceive that since *GOD* is called *Light*, the Word in this place can only signify Purity or Sanctity in itself, to which *Darknefs* being opposed, must signify Impurity or Corruption.

There is another Verse of the same Chapter, that farther confirms what we have advanced; that our Purification must be real or inherent: *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*. Let us weigh a little the meaning of these Words, which contain a Condition and a double Promise; the Condition is, that we *confess our Sins*, which supposes us acquainted with them, that we detest, and strive against them; without which, the Confession would not be sincere; the Promise includes Pardon and Purification.

First, *He is faithful to pardon our Sins*. But how does he pardon them? he pardons the Acts of them to those whose Dispositions are such as we have mentioned, by not interrupting the course of his sanctifying Graces towards them; we may likewise add, that he pardons them by taking away the Eternity of Punishments, and that *GOD* grants this favour at the Intercession of his Son.

Secondly, *He is just, to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*. The Purification, here distinguished from Pardon, must be of a different nature. Why is this Operation here ascribed to Justice? Because Justice cannot suffer Injustice to subsist, without opposing it, 'till it is utterly destroyed.

But,

But, it may be asked, what is wanting toward the Salvation of him, whose Sins God has pardoned ?

This is what very few understand ; they make not a sufficient difference between the *Acts*, and the *Source* from which those flow ; between the Effects of Corruption, and Corruption itself. Let us suppose, that though the *Acts* are pardoned, the Substance of Evil is not thereby rooted up. Lop the Branches of a Tree without destroying it to the Root, your Work will always be to begin again ; as long as the Root continues alive, it will constantly produce fresh Branches.

An inordinate Self-Love is the Root that produces in us all wicked Acts ; but those Acts being pardoned, the Root still subsists ; and as long as it doth so, we shall remain Unrighteous, and incapable of holding Communion with GOD.

We see then, it is not enough to obtain the pardon of the wicked Acts we have committed, if we are not also thoroughly cleansed from all Iniquity.

Though this digression, Sir, is superfluous to you, who go to the bottom of things, I cannot forbear allowing one moment's Attention to two Verses of the same Epistle, that contain the Summary of all I have now said, 1 St. *John* iii. 2, 3. *We know, when the Son of GOD shall appear we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is ; therefore every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

We cannot see GOD as he is, without being like him. It is impossible to be like him without being purified, not only from Acts of Injustice, but also from the whole Source of Wickedness ; which is, as it were, incorporated with, and naturalized in us.

Therefore, such as in this Life have only touched on, or begun this great Work, must certainly continue it in the next, 'till they become like JESUS CHRIST ; otherwise they cannot see him as he is.

I doubt, Sir, whether after so many strong Proofs, any more Objections can well be started against the Opinion in question ; I should be ready to hear them, though I should be much mistaken, if the Principles  
which

which we have laid down, will not furnish us with Solutions or Answers to all that can be advanced against it.

If it be objected, as I have heard some Persons do, that GOD is too good to inflict such Punishment upon his Children, as are supposed in a State of Purification ; that, in short, there is no Condemnation for those who are in CHRIST JESUS: our first Principle affords a Solution to the difficulty ; viz. *That GOD, properly speaking, does not punish Men, but leaves them to reap the Fruits of what they have sown.*

Upon this Principle it must be observed, that the Souls which, after this Life, suffer Torment proportioned to the *Evil* which is in them, do not pass into that State of suffering by a Sentence, positively pronounced by GOD. GOD has no Torment to inflict on his Creatures ; and though, in compliance with the usual way of speaking, it has been said in one of my first Letters, that Divine Justice observes an exact proportion between the Rewards it bestows, and the Punishments it inflicts, it is not therefore to be so understood, as if GOD made his Creatures suffer, or inflicted Torments on them.

Whence then can they proceed ? I have already said it more than once, and it cannot be repeated too often ; from themselves. To which I add, that they have let themselves grow worse and worse for want of proper Care, by sowing their Field with bad Seed, which has proved a Poison to them.

But to speak without a figure ; What is *sowing to the Flesh* ? It is the gratifying our Inclinations, and thereby fortifying, and rivetting those ill Habits, which at last tyrannize over us.

What is the meaning of *reaping Corruption from the Flesh* ? It is experiencing the Torment resulting from that Tyranny, being deprived of the Objects, which we could not part with, feeling cutting Remorse, for having voluntarily attached ourselves to them.

Here I might make some Remarks on the Nature of Habits, and the Power they have over those, who have

have suffer'd them to grow inveterate ; but, perhaps, I may have occasion to do this, when I come to answer your last Difficulties. Allow me, Sir, to reserve this for another Letter.

## L E T T E R XI.

*Wherein these two Objections are answered ; First, That if Hell is only a State of Purification, strictly speaking, there will be no Hell. Secondly, That this is placing the Souls of the Righteous with those of the Wicked.*

S I R,

**I** Was very sensible that you proposed your last difficulties, rather to give me an opportunity of returning an Answer to them, than to communicate any farther Light to yourself.

But before I come to the Particulars, concerning the Bottom of the question, it may be proper to settle the signification of the word *Hell* ; for it is capable of different Senses.

By *Hell* is frequently meant a State of Punishment, Torment, Remorse, and Anguish. Sometimes the Word is used in Scripture to signify the *Grave* ; and, if our Divines had not in several places translated it in this last Sense, we should have found the word *Hell* much oftner in Scripture, and applied to Subjects which cannot relate to the Reprobate ; as might be shewn in many instances.

However, as Words receive their Signification only from the Ideas annexed to them, to avoid all ambiguity, and keep to the most common Acceptation of them, we shall understand by the word *Hell*, a State of Torment, Remorse and gnawing Worms, &c. which is the Portion of the Reprobate. By the *Reprobate* I here mean, not Persons predestinated to Damnation, as several imagine ; but such as have employed their Liberty, only in resisting the Truth, by stifling

the Reproofs of Conscience, till they have at last scarce heard its Language.

I now return to your Question, and say, that though Hell is supposed to be but of finite Duration, it is not therefore less Hell; if it may in some sense be called a State of Purification, it is only such in regard to its Design and Use; as it will end at last, and restore Souls to an Union with GOD, after it has entirely consumed in them all Iniquity. But in regard to the Pains and Torments proper to it, we may justly call it *Hell*, and take the Word in the whole Extent of the Ideas given us of that State in Scripture.

In all these respects, we may consider it as a State of *weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; a State of *Privation* and *Darkness*; a State of positive Torments, faintly represented under the Notion of a *Lake of Brimstone*; a State of *devouring Hunger* and *Thirst*, in opposition to the Pleasures which Men have tasted in this World; a State of Shame and mortifying Confusion, in opposition to Vain-Glory and Love of Praise; a State of Remorse and interior Anguish, occasion'd by a quick Sense of our being the only Authors of all the Woes we endure; and this in opposition to Security and false Confidence.

In short, we may even look on it as an *Eternal Fire*, or an Eternity of Torments, in respect to what the Damned will certainly feel; for there is good reason to believe, that, since the Scripture represents the Duration of their Torment, as an Eternity, it will appear so to them, not only by the Number of Years and Ages it shall swallow up, but likewise because the least part of Time will seem to them an Eternity.

When therefore we suppose Hell-Torments will one day end, we don't depart from the Ideas which both holy Scripture and good Sense give us of it. When speaking of the Eternity of Hell, we may even make use of the very Terms in which it is described, such as an *Eternal Fire*, a *Worm that never dieth*; and it is but too probable, as I just now observed, that the Sufferers

ferers of those dreadful Torments will reckon every Hour an Age, and every Age an Eternity.

I come now to your second Difficulty, which is, That by my Hypothesis, the Souls of the *Just* and the *Reprobates* are placed together! By no means; for in the Sense which we have given to the word *Hell*, it will not be the Portion of the Righteous, but only of the Wicked.

But, say you, what Place will you then assign to the Righteous? I own, were it my business here to determine their Situation or Place of Abode, I should be put to a non-plus; for we have no Ideas of the manner of the Existence of Spirits, nor of the Place they occupy; the most general Opinion is, that they don't occupy Place, but this I do not pretend to determine.

I shall only observe, that when we speak of Place, in order to denote the Happiness or Misery of Spirits separated from Bodies, we can only form such Ideas of it, as are widely different from Truth: for if they are Spirits, external Objects can make impression on them, and therefore, their Happiness or Misery doth not depend on the Place they occupy, even though they were supposed capable of occupying it, but solely on their good or bad Disposition; which is exactly the Scheme of the *English* Divines, mentioned in one of my former Letters; to avoid Impropriety of Speech, we ought to substitute the Term *State* or *Situation*, instead of that of *Place*.

On this foot, we need be at no great pains to assign the Righteous their Portion; I speak of those righteous Persons, whose Sanctification is not finished; and we shall without scruple assert, that they will be *happy or miserable, in proportion to the good or bad State of their inner Man*.

This Consequence flows from our second Principle, *That the measure of Holiness, is the measure of Happiness*; and you may remember, Sir, the Remarks I made on it in my Ninth Letter, that those in whom *Good shall be found to have the ascendant over Evil*, will for that Reason be *more Happy than Miserable, &c.* I shall

not

not here repeat what I have already said on that Subject.

I shall only observe, that we may, without falling into Mistake, call that a *middle State*, which is a sort of *Medium* between *perfect Happiness* and what we have call'd *Hell*; and this *middle State* will be the Portion of Souls moderately virtuous, in whom Righteousness has not yet destroyed all Unrighteousness. However, tho' we speak of this as a *State* in the singular Number, we do not thereby exclude a great diversity of States, or different degrees, according to the degree of Righteousness or Unrighteousness that shall be found in each Soul.

Sir, I don't know whether I have sufficiently answered your last Difficulties; but if you have any more to propose, I'll gladly answer them as well as I can. *I am, &c.*

### *The Answer to the Eleventh* LETTER.

S I R,

**I**F I durst venture to beg of you some farther Illustration of the Subject, it should not be concerning the Truth or Reality of this State of Purification, of which I am fully satisfied; but on the Manner and Nature of the Pains the Soul must there undergo. This, perhaps, may be a piece of Indiscretion; but I hope I shall have no more fresh Difficulties to trouble you with, after this Question is answered.



## L E T T E R XII.

*Wherein is enquired what the Nature of the Pains of the State of Purification may probably be; and whether the Habits we have contracted in this Life, will subsist in the next.*

S I R,

**I**T is no easy Task you have laid upon me in your last Letter. When we undertake to determine too nicely, in things of which we have no Certainty, either from Experience or positive Revelation, we run the hazard of falling into Mistakes.

The Question you have proposed is of this sort; for Experience gives us no Information of the matter, except it be by Reflection on what passes in this Life: Conscience and Revelation do indeed discover the Principles of it; but as to the full detail of Circumstances, we are left entirely in the dark, and can never speak of it with too much caution; we can only propose Conjectures; and on that foot I shall speak of it.

*First*, then, We may suppose that the Soul at its departure from the Body, hath a strong Sense of the *Impressions of Truth*; the same *Truth*, which is a pleasant Light to pure Souls, is, on the contrary, exceeding painful to those, who are yet in a State of Imperfection; it is even so intolerable to the *Reprobate*, that they would rather be crushed by the fall of *Rocks* and *Mountains*, as it is expressed in the *Apocalypse*, than be exposed to the shocking Impression which that Light makes on them.

But how is it possible, that the same Light should be pleasant to some, and intolerable to others? Because it shews every one the true State of things, and particularly the situation of his Inner Man.

To



To some it discovers the Harmony which subsists between the Divine Attributes, and the Dispositions of their own Souls, the Conformity between the *Copy* and the *Original*; in a word, it lets them see they have no Inclination or Propensity left, but that of being re-united to their Center? What can be more delightful than such a discovery?

To others, it discovers a Disproportion and extreme Opposition, between the Perfections of GOD, and their own inward Dispositions; Inclinations prone to things sensible, deep-rooted Habits which strongly oppose the flight of the Soul toward Sovereign Goodness, a Stock of Self-Love so inveterate, that they see it in spite of themselves, as the Center in which all their Desires are united. What can be more mortifying than a discovery of this nature?

Let us now come to something more particular; I would have you observe by the way, that I do not here repeat the distinction of different degrees; because I have already spoke of it several times: It will be proper to suppose it wherever it shall be necessary.

The Effects of this penetrating Light, must produce most lively and painful Sentiments, which are the necessary Consequences of those already mentioned.

*First*, The Privation of the Objects to which we have been so much attached, must needs be very bitter.

*Secondly*, The full, entire, and uninterrupted View of ourselves, whereby we see a World of Iniquity, which we had never known till that Moment.

*Thirdly*, A distinct Knowledge of the true or real worth of things, by which we shall see the folly of having preferr'd the *visible* to the *invisible*.

*Fourthly*, A most exact remembrance of the whole course of our past Lives; of the Graces we have received, and the small use we have made of them; of the loss of time, of which we till then knew not the Value; in a word, of the secret resistance made to the Reproofs of *Truth*, which we have industriously avoided to hear, in order to procure ourselves a false Repose.

*Fifthly*, The grief we feel on seeing ourselves fast bound by Habits contrary to Sanctity ; the Conviction we shall then have, that we ourselves are the Authors of them, and that they are come to such a height, only by repeated voluntary Acts, which we would not forsake.

*Sixthly*, The violence we must do ourselves, before we can produce Acts entirely contrary to those Habits ; for every one knows that a Habit can be destroyed only by contrary Acts, more frequent and vigorous than those which form'd it. We do with pleasure, things in themselves most difficult, when we have once acquired a Habit. But what is pleasant to some, would become painful to others, who have contracted contrary Habits.

Let us suppose two Persons ; one a *Tumbler* or *Rope-dancer*, accustomed from his Youth to bodily Exercise, and passionately fond only of such Exercises. The other a *Philosopher*, involved in profound Meditation, and accustomed from his Youth, to pass whole Days and Nights in his Study, without being ever fatiated with Reading and Knowledge. Endeavour to make them exchange Professions : Put the *Tumbler* in the *Philosopher's* place, bid him divert himself with the *Folio's* : Order him to meditate three fourths of every Day, remove from his View all Objects that may distract his Thoughts. On the other hand, put the *Philosopher* in the *Tumbler's* place, make him ramble up and down the Country, dance upon the Rope, and play a thousand Harlequin Tricks upon a Stage.

Then ask each of them how he likes his new State. They will both tell you they are on the Rack, that this kind of Life is insupportable to them. The *Philosopher* will envy the Condition of the *Tumbler*, and the *Tumbler* that of the *Philosopher* ; neither of them will be able to imagine, that the other can be miserable in a Profession, in which he himself took so much delight.

Almost every one finds by daily Experience, that what appears to him difficult, is so in regard to him, only because he is not accustomed to it, or because he has contracted contrary Habits. But

But it may be asked, how Habits contracted in this Life can be preserved in the next? External Actions will not take place there. External Exercises will indeed be quite abolished in that State; but, as those outward Acts, which we here produce, are only the Effects of our Wills, which command all our Limbs, the Dissolution of the Limbs can never annihilate the Cause that put them into Action; that is as vigorous as ever, although it be deprived of Instruments to execute its Orders. A Person passionately fond of Gaming, if you pluck out his Eyes, and tie his Hands, cannot in that state gratify his Passion; but that Passion would not be less violent; perhaps it would even receive double Strength from the Obstacles in his way.

Habits therefore reside in the Soul, that *wills*, and commands; not in the Body, that *does*. True it is, that in this Life the irregular Motions of the Body or Constitution, may contribute to excite various Passions; but the *Will* can suffer only by its own free *Consent*, which it may either give or refuse.

It is by this Consent that the Passions, which at first were only in the *Constitution*, insinuate themselves into the *Will*, and render it equally disordered with themselves. Thus the Rebellions of the Constitution become Acts of the Will, the Repetition of which soon grows into a Habit, as voluntary as the Acts themselves were.

The Soul, when it leaves the Body, does not carry its Constitution with it; but it is certain that it carries its own *Will*, and the Habits that depend upon it.

But still it will be objected, May not the same thing befall a Soul in its separate State, that happens to several Persons in this Life, who being for a time passionately fond of certain Pleasures, insensibly lose all Relish for them, without committing any Violence on themselves? If we observe, we shall find that it is not the Love of Pleasure which such Persons lose, but the pleasure they took in this or that Object. A new Ob-

ject affords them greater delight, for which reason they quit the first. They are so far from losing the Love of Pleasure, when they are disgusted at one particular Object, that they are determined in their Choice by the same Love of Pleasure.

Here I except those Persons in whom Conversion and the Love of GOD gradually surmount their worldly Inclinations; but we may be assured, that this will not be done without Violence; our Saviour undoubtedly knew what trouble it would cost a Man, when he compares the Pain it would give, to the pulling out of an Eye, &c.

Hence we may conclude, that all Passions and Habits that seem to slacken or be destroyed, without some Struggle on our part, have only substituted another Object in the place of a former; it is a Child who does not cry when you take his Play-thing from him, because you give him another which he likes better. Nothing is more common than the Reality of this Instance; and it is to no purpose for a Man to be displeased with himself, upon the Easiness he finds in disengaging himself from certain Objects. The Disgust they inspire, is the sole Cause of it; he parts with them only to make himself amends elsewhere.

But in the next Life there will be no such thing; the Soul will there find none of its favourite Objects or Amusements; it will see itself *alone*; and that View will be more terrible than we can at present imagine.

The sight of ourselves is one of the most insupportable Torments in this World. A Man can bear the weight of the most painful Labours, who would not be able to endure the constant View of himself one whole Day. And yet this View of ourselves is so confused, so transient, and we see so many other things with ourselves, that we never see ourselves as we really are.

When the Soul shall be separated from all things, we shall see ourselves in a very different manner; when there shall be no more Intervals, either for Sleep or the other Necessities of Life, or for conversing with other

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Men, (Intervals which give great relief to those who cannot endure Self-inspection) when we shall be no longer able to cover the *bottom* of our Intentions with specious Pretexts, when we shall be forced to open our Ears to the Rebukes of Conscience, and the Truth will speak so loud, that we can no longer evade it. That *Truth* which we obstinately refuse to listen to in this Life, will then be in its *Kingdom*, we must hear it, how mortifying soever its Lessons may prove.

There the Learned will find the Uselessness of most of their Studies, that have not led them to the knowledge of the supreme Good; there they will look upon the Subjects of their grand Disputes, as so many mere Nothings.

There the Divines themselves, who imagined they preached the purest Doctrine, who with a well meant Zeal have opposed the Truth, whilst they intended to oppose Error, will be no less surprized than afflicted at the sight of their past Obstinacy and Prejudices. The Impression which their Decisions may probably have made on others, will prove no small pain to them; and who knows but the Books they wrote in that Spirit, may aggravate their Affliction?

There those who sought their own Glory, and the Applause of their Auditors, will be covered with Confusion; their Learning and Eloquence will pass current no longer. If they have the least grain of true Zeal for the Advancement of Piety, that alone will be of service to them. May not what St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, be properly applied here? That he *who hath raised a bad Structure, upon a good Foundation, shall indeed be saved, yet so as by Fire; but his Work shall be burnt, being of combustible Stuff, as Wood, Hay, and Stubble, &c.* Thus those who have taught several Errors, but with a good Intention, will lose the Fruit of their Labour, but the Foundation of their Intention will subsist in the midst of the Fire, which shall consume all the rest; nor is there any need for supposing a material Fire; GOD himself is a *consuming Fire* for all Error and Unrighteousness.

There the sincerely pious will find themselves very far from what they thought themselves; and the advantageous Opinion Mankind entertain'd of them will inhanche their Confusion: there the whole Detail of the divine Bounties, and their own Ingratitude, will be set before their eyes; and this View will contain in it all that is most strongly afflicting.

There, what we esteem great in this World, will appear a mere nothing; every thing will vanish before the infinite Being and supreme Cause.

But nothing will give Men so much pain, as the knowledge of Truths not reduced to practice, and the Injury done to their Neighbour, by not giving him a good Example; and who knows to what degree all those Reflections may afflict separate Souls? If the greatest Miseries we endure here are only the Effects of Sin, who can certainly know how tormenting and bitter the *Cause* itself may prove to a Soul, which will feel its whole Force? The Saints, who in this Life have felt something of it, such as *David, Asaph, Heman, Jeremy, Job, &c.* being unexceptionable Witnesses, can inform us in that point.

Here an Objection may be urged, from what I have elsewhere advanced, That the *Measure of Holiness constitutes the Measure of Happiness*; and consequently, that those in whom *Good* shall prevail above *Evil*, must be more happy than miserable. If so, says the Objector, the State you just now described, can relate to only those Souls in which *Evil* outweighs *Good*; for you represent them in a most distressed and painful Situation.

To this I reply, that I do not positively determine to which Class, what I just now said may be applied; they are only general Expressions, that must vary according to the different Degrees of Perfection or Imperfection. However, not to wander from the *Thesis* we have laid down, I say, it does not thence follow, that every Soul in which the Principle of *Good* is more prevalent than that of *Evil*, must therefore actually be in a State more pleasant than tormenting. This  
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sounds like a Paradox ; but the following Examples will illustrate it.

A Kingdom harassed with Civil War, where the loyal Party is stronger than that of the Rebels, will by that means be in a fair way to have Peace and Tranquillity ; but the Inhabitants of this Kingdom cannot enjoy a perfect Peace, till the loyal Party has gained a complete Victory ; whilst the War continues, they will always have a share in the Troubles and Confusions that are inseparable from it. Thus, though by their Advantages over the Enemy, they will be more happy than miserable, yet their Situation would be actually more distressed than pleasant.

Hence we may easily conceive, that a Soul in which the Principle of *Good* is more prevalent than that of *Evil*, must feel a greater Sense of the Pain of *Evil*, whilst the Struggle continues, than of the Enjoyment of *Good* : And this we see verified every day, in the case of bodily Health ; a Man who has a Principle of Health stronger than that of Sickness, whose Blood and noble Parts are in good order, is in the main more healthy than sick ; but, though the Pain he suffers be not dangerous, yet he cannot enjoy the Benefit of Health, till his free from all manner of Pain ; he is even more sensible of a little Ailment, than of the Health of his whole Body.

But it may be asked, Why do not the most imperfect Souls endure in this Life Pains in proportion to the bad State of their inner Man ? Because the Soul, while in the Body, is in a sort of Lethargy, that makes it insensible of its greatest Calamities ; the more imperfect it is, and employ'd on sensible Objects, the more it is a Stranger to its own inward Disorders.

A Soul that disengages itself in this Life from the Senses, and is employ'd on invisible Objects, has a watchful Eye over what passes within itself, is much more sensible of the least Deformity. When being disengaged from all that is material, the Divine Light shall dart fully upon it, how much more sensible will it be of what may ever injure infinite Holiness ?

Hence we may likewise draw an Argument for the Necessity of Purification; I ask those who deny it, Can a Man be saved without Repentance? Can he really repent, without knowing and feeling his Misery? But how many moderately virtuous Persons are there, who in this Life never knew the least part of their inward Misery, and yet certainly cannot be ranked with the Reprobate?

I further ask, Whether the Sorrow of true Repentance ought to flow from the Love of GOD, or the Fear of Hell? But how many of those last mentioned know Religion, only by Rewards and Punishments, and are Strangers to the Amiability of GOD? It is not therefore the Love of him, that is the Cause of their Sorrow.

To this it may be answered, That this \* Motive may be excited in a Soul at the last Moments. And though it should produce but one single Act of the Love of GOD, that would be sufficient to save it. Now I reply, That an Act so suddenly produced is very equivocal; but supposing it sincere, and strong enough to secure a Soul from Damnation, it does not thence follow, that therefore it will put it in the actual possession of the Object.

The Soul must first know the Object it designs to love. It must know its self, and what is either to be destroyed, or built up there; which will not be the Work of a few days.

In reality, the Acts here supposed, how sincere soever they may be, are rather Acts of *desiring* to love GOD, than Acts of real Love. The Desire a Man may have

\* This way of speaking favours of a Metamorphosis, or rather of Fiction; nothing is more contrary to the Nature of Man, than to pretend to excite Motives in him; the most real Motives are very often those he least perceives, and which prompt him to Action, without his reflecting on them. Whatever is excited suddenly, is borrowed and counterfeit, or at least imaginary. Imagination may be excited, and certain Motions raised in the Machine, which are termed *Contrition*, and *Acts of the Love of God*; but I would know whether these fine Words will make the Thing real, and whether they'll pass for current Coin in the invisible World.



of pulling down an old Building, in order to raise a new one, is many Removes from the actual Execution of that Design.

After all, can any one acquainted with Man imagine, that some good Wishes and Desires are sufficient to change the Bottom of his Heart, and make him a new Man?

I believe, Sir, it would be superfluous to push our Conjectures any farther about the Nature of the Purification of Souls separated from the Body ; it would be certainly more useful to draw from them practical Rules for our Conduct ; which I leave to your Reflection.

*P. S.* I shall, by way of Postscript, answer the following Question ; *viz.* Whether those who have wanted the Means of Salvation in this Life, and have undergone all manner of Sufferings, must endure the pain of a Purification in the other?

To which I answer, That bodily Sufferings do not purify us *physically*, but only so far as they may serve as Means to the Person who endures them, for entering into himself, and knowing himself better ; as they are proper for delivering him from Dissipation and Sensuality, and exercise him in Patience and Resignation. In all these respects, Sufferings are so many Steps to, or distant means of Sanctity, as the Apostle insinuateth, when he tells us, That *God chastiseth us for our Benefit, to the end, we may be Partakers of his Holiness* ; but the near and immediate Means are purely spiritual ; such as the knowledge of Truth, and of ourselves, from which other sorts of Sufferings may arise, but of a very different nature from the former.

I say then, in answer to the Question, that it is highly probable, that those whose Lives have been one continued Series of bodily Sufferings, and who have not had an opportunity of knowing the Truth, must nevertheless pass through a State of *Purification* ; but there is reason to presume it will give them but little Pain, and will, perhaps, in some respects, afford more Comfort than Bitterness. This may be inferred from  
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the Certainty of a *Compensation*; these have had their Good in this Life; it is but just they should be comforted in that which is to come.

But a physical Reason may likewise be assigned for this, drawn from the preceding Truths.

First, Such Souls as we have just now supposed, have already, by their Sufferings, made the first Steps toward Sanctity, or have had the negative Means, so far as the Inclinations to Pleasure and Vanity were never strengthened in them, or converted into Habits; from whence it follows, that when the Truth shall be manifested in them, it will find the less Deformity, and fewer Irregularities to rectify.

2dly, The Manifestation of Truth till then not known, and which they never have resisted, cannot but occasion a very agreeable Surprise. Those Souls, whose spiritual Faculties had been, as it were, benumbed, by a multitude of Obstacles, shall find themselves, at their Separation from the Body, like a blind Man, who recovers his Sight, and even knows not that it is possible to see.

In the 3d place, Such Souls will have nothing to suffer from a Privation of sensible Objects, or from the Impressions that the Enjoyment of such Objects might have made upon them; far from being habituated to the Taste of Pleasure, they have been accustomed only to Pain; and this single Consideration will make a very great difference betwixt them, and those of contrary Habits: for as it is extremely painful to pass from Enjoyment to Privation, (which becomes a real Pain) so the Transition from Pain to Rest is exquisitely pleasant.

Hence it is easy to conceive, that the Purification of such Souls, will not inance their Anguish, but prove rather an Alleviation of it, by the Satisfaction they will receive from the Discovery of Truth, and the Recovery of the Use of their Faculties, in regard to it.

This same Truth will not indeed fail to rebuke them for all it finds unjust in them, and reproach them in particular with what they have committed against the Light of their Conscience; this they must certainly undergo, and

and it will be more or less painful to them, as they have sinned more or less voluntarily. But there is reason to believe, that the Truth finding them flexible, will make much less violent Impressions on them, than on Souls accustomed to Resistance, and hardened against all its Admonitions.

From hence we may understand the Reason of those repeated Declarations of our Saviour, *Blessed are ye who mourn now, for ye shall be comforted; but woe to you who now enjoy Pleasure, for ye shall cry and lament.* This State then seems to be only ordained to make amends to some for the Hardships they have endured, and punish others for the abuse of the good things they have here enjoyed. However, if we consider things as they are in their own Nature, we shall find, that this Compensation does not proceed from an arbitrary Will in GOD, either to reward or punish, but is the natural Effect resulting from each Man's Disposition, when he leaves this World.

## ANSWER to LETTER XII.

S I R,

THE Illustrations contained in your last, leave me no more Difficulties to propose. When I happened to form any one, on perusing your Letter, I soon met with a Solution: it would be much more useful, as you justly observe, to make those Truths subservient to the Conduct of Life; allow me therefore to intreat you to communicate your farther Reflections on this Subject.

You have hitherto handled the State of *Purification*, independently of *Restoration*; in condescension to those, who would not admit of the latter. Can you not now unite those two Points, and shew what Instructions and Uses may be drawn from them both? I hope you will not refuse me that Satisfaction.

## L E T T E R    X I I I .

*Wherein is shewn, that, admitting the different Sentiments of Divines together, both the Restoration and Purification, as here proposed, are proved.*

S I R,

**N**Othing is more easy than to unite the two Subjects, which we have hitherto considered separately. They not only agree perfectly well, but, which is more, are inseparably connected; for, to take the Matter right, one is only the End of the other, the *Purification* of Souls having no other End, but their *Restoration*.

Both of them shew us the unchangeable Attributes of the Deity, and unravel those Obscurities and seeming Contrarieties, which appear to us to be opposite to the Wisdom of his Proceedings.

When we go back to the Origin of all things, we find nothing there but *God alone*, possessing in himself the Fulness of *Being, Life, and Happiness*; in short, all Perfection.

When we come down to what we know of his Works, we find Creatures perfectly good, the noblest of which bears the Image of his Creator, and for whom all other Creatures were formed. Essential Goodness can produce nothing but what is good. Such were all his Works, when they came first out of his hands; of which sovereign Wisdom bears witness, *And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good.* Gen. ch. i.

After this, it is hard to conceive how *moral* and *physical Evil* come into the World; if GOD has created nothing but what was good, whence proceed the *Evils* wherewith the Earth is filled?

Let us here say, that GOD, who is the Author of all *Being* and *Reality*, cannot be the Author of *Evil*; since,

since, properly speaking, *Evil* is no *Reality*; it is rather a *Negation* of Being, a Defect of *Reality* and *Perfection*, a Disorder crept in among Creatures well ordered.

*Moral Evil* is an accidental Disorder to *Spirits*, as *natural Evil* is to the *corporeal* Nature. *Moral Evil* must be the *Cause* of *physical Evil*.

It is plain, that corporeal Nature, or Matter, not being of the number of free Agents, could not of itself deviate from the Order in which it was created. This Deviation or Disorder must be ascribed to *Spirits*, who by an ill use of their Liberty, have introduced Confusion among themselves, and all subordinate Beings; that is, through all material Nature; which, being put under Man, must share his Disaster; as the Apostle assures us, *The Creatures are subjected to Vanity and Bondage, by the Will of him who hath subjected them thereto, viz. by the Will of Man.*

Behold then the Works of GOD fallen from their original Beauty, and the noblest of his Creatures, even his own Image, disfigured! But is the Damage irreparable? Is the great Architect neither able nor willing to find out an Expedient for restoring the Works of his own hands?

This is a Subject of great dispute among the Divines, who are distinguished by the Name of *Particularists* and *Universalists*, each of them maintaining a *Thesis* built upon some Truths, though indeed they know but one part of them; could they once unfold them, they would soon agree. Perhaps the Contents of these Letters concerning a *Restoration* and *Purification* may prove the Key to the whole. This is what I shall now endeavour to illustrate.

The above-mentioned Divines agree in a general Answer to the Question proposed, That GOD both *can* and *will* do it; the first of these Propositions is founded on the *Omnipotence* of the Creator; the second on his *Goodness*. But then they differ, in the following Points.

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The *Particularists* restrain this Will to a small number, called by them the *Elect*; whereas the *Universalists* maintain, that GOD will save all Men.

The former reply, “ That the Will of GOD is efficacious, and therefore he cannot fall short of his Purpose; that if he willed all Men to be saved, he would save them effectually; that it is annihilating his Omnipotence to say, He desires to save all Men, but that he cannot.”

The *Universalists*, on the other hand, maintain, “ That it is injurious to the Goodness of GOD, to say, that he can save all Men, and will only save a part; that it is accusing him of Cruelty, who desires that none should perish, but that all may come to Repentance; that if this Will hath not its Effect, the Fault is not on GOD’s part, but on Man’s, who resists the gracious Will of his Creator.”

Hence it appears, that the Divines of both Denominations, after they have assented to the *Thesis* in general, deny it when they come to *Particulars*; the former injure the Ideas we have of the Goodness of GOD, the latter those we entertain of his Omnipotence. Let us now see whether we cannot unfold the Riddle: and,

First, We grant the *Particularists*, that the Will of GOD is efficacious; that he cannot be frustrated of his Purpose; and that all those whom he hath predestinated to Salvation, and for whom CHRIST died, will be infallibly saved.

2dly, We likewise grant the *Universalists*, that GOD wills all Men should be saved; that he destines no one to Misery; that CHRIST has tasted Death for all Men, and designed, by his being lifted up from Earth, to draw all Mankind to him.

This seems contradictory; we shall be able to clear up the Matter, if we here join together the different *Theses* of each Party.

<i>The Acts of the Divine Will are efficacious.</i>	Partic.
<i>God wills all Men to be saved.</i>	Univerf.
<i>Therefore, all Men will one day be saved.</i>	

*All*

*All those whom God has predestinated to Salvation, will infallibly be saved.* Partic.

*God predestinates none to Wrath, but to Salvation.* Univers.

*Therefore all will be infallibly saved.*

*All those for whom CHRIST died, will partake of Salvation.* Partic.

*JESUS CHRIST tasted Death for all, and was lifted up from Earth, to draw all Men to him.* Univers.

*Therefore all will partake of Salvation, and at last be drawn after him.*

I foresee the Conclusion will be denied, and the Argument retorted as follows, viz. *Salvation is promised only to those who are sanctified.*

*Infinitely more die, who are not sanctified, than who are.*

*Therefore all Men will not be saved.*

Now, to shew that the first Conclusion is just, and the second false, we need only join to these two Propositions a third drawn from the Principles of the Universalists.

*Salvation is promised only to those who are sanctified. God wills that all Men come to Repentance, and the knowledge of the Truth; all of them do not attain to it in this Life.*

*Therefore this must be done in the other.*

In order to support this Conclusion, which is a new Proposition, let us make use of some Principles of the same Divines.

*God offers all Men the Means of Sanctification; but commits no Violence on their Liberty; all do not make their advantage of the Proffer; all do not make use of these Means to come to Repentance and Sanctification.*

I ask now, Shall the Purposes of GOD be frustrated by the Resistance of Man? Will he not find some Method for bringing them to Repentance and Holiness, without forcing their Liberty? If they do not correspond with those Means in this Life, which is but of a Minute's Duration, when compared with Eternity, will

will he confine his Concern for the Restoration of his Work to that short Span? Shall not he, who is so well acquainted with all its Springs, be able to bring it back to himself at last?

To this Question I shall oppose a Principle of the *Particularists*, which will serve as an Answer to it, *viz.*

*The Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance; all those whom God has predestinated to Salvation, are also predestinated to the Means thereof.*

According to the *Universalists*, all are predestinated to Salvation:

*Therefore all are predestinated to the Means of Salvation.*

The Will of GOD must be accomplished sooner or later, and is not restrained to any Time or Place. If then there are numberless Creatures who have in this Life wanted Means sufficient for Salvation, or have not made use of them when afforded; they will be allow'd Time, when sooner or later they will make an advantage of them; because then they will know their Value; and this Time is no other than that of the *Purification* of Souls after this Life, which is designed only for their *Restoration*.

This Purification may be divided into two Classes, each containing almost an infinite Diversity of Degrees; one may bear the Name of *Hell*, in regard of the Obduracy of those who shall endure its Torments, and the Heat of the Fire that will consume them; the other may be called a *Middle State*, because it will serve to purify those Souls that are but indifferently virtuous, whose Sanctification, while here, was but begun. They will both tend, at last, to restore the Image of GOD in all Men.

I said, in the beginning of this Letter, *That the knowledge of these Truths manifested to us the unchangeable Attributes of the Deity, and cleared up to us a great many Obscurities, and seeming Contradictions.* We have seen, that the Contradictions among Divines are hereby effectually reconciled, and that they differ only as they separate Doctrines which ought to be united.



I will here add, that hereby the *Goodness* of GOD, his *Omnipotence*, *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Holiness*, *Faithfulness*, and *Mercy*, are fully manifested to us.

First, I say, his *Goodness*, as GOD wills the Happiness of all his Creatures, and their Return to the primitive Perfection they had received at his hands.

His *Omnipotence*, as it hence appears that the Will of GOD is efficacious; that his Arm is not shortened, and that he is able, sooner or later, to accomplish all his Designs.

His *Faithfulness*, as it thereby appears, that his Gifts and his Calling are without Repentance; that having once destined Man to Bliss, he doth not desist from his first Design.

His *Mercy*, as he furnishes the most rebellious with the Means of Sanctification, and this without fixing any Bounds to it; as he forgets the Outrages, Contempt, and Disobedience of wicked Men; in a word, as he extends the Effects of this Mercy, not to some only, but to all without exception, not only in this Life, but also in the Life to come.

What shall we think of the *Justice* and *Holiness* of GOD? Will not they have their Course? Will not *Goodness* and *Mercy* oppose them? Certainly *Justice* and *Holiness* are not contrary to *Goodness* and *Mercy*; and it is impossible that these should interrupt the Effects of the other Attributes. Let us say rather, that they concur in the same Design of purifying Men, although here *Justice* and *Holiness* manifest themselves in a more positive manner.

His *Justice* is manifested, by his leaving every one to reap the Fruits of what he has sown, by making *Tribulation* and *Anguish* fall upon every Soul that doth evil, and making them then eat the Fruit of their own Doings and Devices.

His *Holiness* is manifested, as it hence appears, that GOD doth not design to be reunited to his Creatures, before he has sanctified them; there can be no Communion in them between *Light* and *Darkness*; till they become *Children of the Light*, Divine Justice will

be the same to them, that Fire is to *Hay* and *Stubble*. And this Fire will never cease to burn, till all *Unrighteousness* is consumed. Then only *Justice* will cease to be rigorous, without ceasing to be just.

Let us likewise add, that this Purification manifesteth the depth of the Divine *Wisdom*, in having found out a way how to replace all Creatures in their original State at last, by bringing them back, sooner or later, to that Holiness from which they were so far removed ; and that by the Operations of *Truth* and *Justice*, without offering Violence to their Liberty.

The Divine Wisdom farther appears, in that the Work of Redemption ultimately tends to destroy all the Enemies of GOD, and extends its Effects, without measure, to all his Creatures, till having nothing foreign in them, GOD himself may be *All in all*. Surely this proceeds from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working.

Let us here farther observe, that nothing is more proper for justifying Providence, not only in regard to the *Blessings* and *Miseries*, which seem in this Life to be distributed with so much Inequality ; but particularly in regard to the Means of Salvation, which it bestows on some liberally, and seems to refuse them to others.

Since the Creation of the World, infinitely more Men have been unprovided with those Means, than have enjoyed them. Though all Men have had the Testimony of Conscience within them, the Obstacles from without, together with the Biass of irregular Inclinations, have been too strong, and almost insurmountable to this Principle of Truth, which was, as it were, buried in them.

What Comparison is there, as to the Means of Salvation, between the *Jewish* Nation, from *Moses* to CHRIST, and the numberless multitude of the Pagan World? And what Comparison is there in this respect between *Christians*, and an Infinity of Barbarians, who hardly know any Distinction of Good and Evil ; wild and savage People, who have little more of Humanity than the bare Form?

What

What Comparison is there between Christians themselves, some of whom are, in respect of others, like so many Beasts of Burden, bowed down from their Youth, under the Weight of Toil and Labour, which scarce allow them time to enquire, whether they have Souls to cultivate and prepare for a future Life? And who, on observing such Disproportions between those who by nature are of equal Dignity, can discern Impartiality in GOD?

Certainly nothing can justify this Conduct, but the knowledge of a State of *Purification*, where those who have been unprovided with the means of coming to the Knowledge of Truth in this Life, will find them in another. *It is equally answered from a clear Principle of Reason as well as of Revelation, by from him to whom much is given.*

May we not here apply, what St. Peter says, That *CHRIST* preached to the Spirits in Prison, that had been disobedient in the days of Noah? To what purpose should *CHRIST* preach to them, were it not to bring them to Repentance, and the knowledge of Truth? But whether *CHRIST* exercised this Office towards them in Person, or merely by manifesting Truth to them, is of small Importance to determine. Some Divines are of opinion, that the Article of the Creed, *He descended into Hell*, relates to this; and that those other Words of the same *Epistle* amount to the same Sense. *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that were dead, that they might be judged according to Men in the Flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.* 1 *Epist.* iv. 6. By the *Flesh*, nothing can be here meant but the Principle of Corruption, which Souls carry with them into the other Life; the Judgment that must be exercised upon them, the Fire of Justice, for the destruction of Evil, which must at last end in the Life of God in the Spirit, can only signify the Re-establishment of Souls, and their Reunion with GOD. *make to give the gift of the Spirit, and to give the Spirit of life to them that are dead, according to the riches of his grace.*

In whatever sense the Word *preached* is understood, it must be the Truth published and manifested to the Dead, as a means of Sanctification, which is undoubtedly glad Tidings for them. *sequence of the Gospel, to the living and the dead, to the manifestation of the truth.*

We may farther say, that this Truth justifies the Equity of GOD, in all the dreadful Judgments he has inflicted on whole Nations, a great part whereof knew neither Good nor Evil. Not to mention the Deluge, and the Burning of *Sodom* and *Gommorha*; how terrible was the Slaughter in all the Cities of *Canaan*, that were struck as so many declared Rebels? On how many Occasions have we seen Children die for the Iniquity of their Fathers, and Subjects for that of Princes; such as the sixty Sons of *Achab*, the ten Sons of *Saul*, the ten Sons of *Haman*, the Children of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and a multitude of *Israelites*, for the Sin of *David*, their King.

In reality, did we not know, that in the other Life there will be a perfect *Compensation*, both in regard to the Means of Salvation, and *Blessings* and *Miseries*; should we not be tempted to cry out, *Is there Knowledge in the Lord, and does he weigh all Men in an equal Balance?*

What Conclusion does our Saviour draw from the Disproportion that is visible in this Life, in relation to the Effects of Justice? That this Justice shall, sooner or later, have its Course on all Men. *Do you think*, says he, *that they who have suffered these things, are greater Sinners than others?* I tell you no, but except you repent, you shall likewise perish\*.†

It is evident, that all those who are in the same State of Depravation, do not in this Life suffer the same Punishments; Justice therefore will be employed on them in the other.

I should never end my Letter, should I undertake to quote all the Passages of Scripture to this purpose. It is time to conclude. You will observe, Sir, that the Truths I have met with in my way, have prevented my making the practical Inferences which I intended; but a little Reflection of your own will discover them better than any thing I can say.

\* Such an Argument in the Mouth of the Son of God, who must certainly know the Compensations that Divine Justice hath in reserve for Men, ought not to be of little weight with us.

## ANSWER to LETTER XIII.

S I R,

I Cannot dispense with your Remarks on the practical Uses. Though your last is a most instructive Recapitulation of the essential Parts of your preceding Letters, there will still be something wanting, if you do not shew expressly the Influence those Truths may have in rectifying our Judgments, and regulating our Conduct.

It is a Prejudice very favourable to the *Thesis* you have maintained, though it were supported by no other Proof, that at your first setting out, you established it on the unchangeable Ideas we have of the Divine Perfections, and concluded with demonstrating, that the same *Thesis* serves to place the great Harmony of those Perfections, in whatever relates to our Salvation, in a stronger Light.

The Justification of Providence, the Union of the different Sentiments of Divines, the Obscurities in the Ways of GOD, cannot flow from an erroneous *Thesis*; and this, Sir, is what I hope you'll not fail to set in its proper Light.

## LETTER XIV.

*Wherein the practical Uses, that result from the preceding Discourses, are set forth.*

S I R,

THE Law and Gospel having no other End, but that of leading Men to *Charity* or *Holiness*, according to JESUS CHRIST, and St. *Paul*; every Opinion that has the least Tendency, either directly or indirectly, to lead from this End, ought to be suspected.

If the Doctrine that has been the Subject of the preceding Letters, was of this kind, I should be ready to

renounce it; but if, on the contrary, it can be shewn, that it includes the strongest Motives, for every one to advance in Holiness, this Consideration will add a new degree of Probability to the Arguments I have already advanced.

Among Persons who have any concern for their Salvation, some are most affected with the Motive of *Love*; others are more so with that of *Fear*. I dare affirm, that these two Motives flow more naturally, and with greater Force and Certainty, from the Truths we have laid down, than from the opposite Opinion; which I think it will not be hard to demonstrate. I begin with the first kind of Motive.

I say then, if we measure the degree of *Love*, by the Perfection of the Object, and the Knowledge we have of it; nothing is more proper than these Truths, to make us in love with *sovereign Perfection*, because nothing makes it appear more amiable to us, whether we consider it in itself, or in regard to us.

First they make us consider the Deity in himself, as the Source of *Being*, *Perfection*, and *Happiness*; as that *pure Goodness* from which no *Evil* can proceed; as the *unchangeable Being*, incapable of the least Variation.

In regard to ourselves, they make us consider him as *communicative Goodness*, that can only will to confer on or procure for his Creatures what is good.

As *unalterable* and *impartial Justice*, incapable of all Preference, that judges invariably of things, as they really are in themselves.

As *Mercy without measure*, which doth good to the Wicked and Ungrateful, is accessible to every Creature, and whose Effects are universal.

As *infinitely penetrating Wisdom*, which thoroughly knows all the Springs of its Work, and employs an infinite Diversity of Means to restore it to its original Perfection.

As boundless Omnipotence, *that does whatever it listeth, both in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth; whose hand none can stay from working, nor say unto it, What dost thou?*

In a word, *as the Saviour of all Mankind*, publishing his *Good Will* towards them, and the design he has formed of re-uniting them all to himself at last, by removing all Obstacles to that Union.

In reality, if any thing can make an Impression upon a Heart capable of feeling, this Idea of GOD must certainly do it; and it will be impossible for those who know him as such, not to love him above all things.

Here I might add, for the satisfaction of those who love a detail of Particulars, that *Faith, Repentance, Patience, Hope*, and the *Love of our Neighbour*, flow from and the same Principles.

Can *Faith* have a better Foundation than the Knowledge of a GOD, who *will* be the Saviour of all Men, and is *able* to perform whatever he *wills*?

What more proper means for producing Repentance, than the Knowledge of a *Justice*, that certainly condemns Wickedness, and of a Mercy accessible to all such, as are willing to make war on Iniquity, 'till it is entirely destroyed?

What is more proper for forming *Hope*, than to know that GOD has no Inclination to cast off his Creatures; that he entertains *Thoughts of Peace, not of Evil*, in order to give them such an End as they can desire?

What more efficacious Motive can be conceived for determining us to the Exercise of Prayer, than to know GOD under the Idea of *Communicative Goodness*, who both *can* and *will* bestow all manner of Blessings on those, to whom he has given his own Son? What is more proper for prevailing with us to hate Sin, than to know that it is the only *Cause* of all the *Evils* with which the World is infected? In short, what is more proper for producing Patience, than to know that these very *Evils*, if rightly used, may become means of our Purification.

I now come to the *Love of our Neighbour*; certainly nothing is more efficacious for rendering it universal, sincere, impartial, and communicative: To regard all Mankind as the Workmanship of GOD, formed

originally after his own Image, called to recover it one day ; to consider the Vices and Imperfections wherewith Men are tainted, as something foreign to their Nature, as so many grievous Distempers, that after severe Sufferings, shall at last be cured? Is any thing more proper for inspiring us with a compassionate and fraternal Love than such Considerations?

It is in this Sense, that all Men truly are, and ever will be our *Neighbours* ; and may be properly called *Members* one of another, and of CHRIST himself, without which the Reprobate could neither be Members of CHRIST, nor of his Children. In this sense they may be consider'd as *sick Members*, that must undergo the Operations of Fire and Instruments, before they are entirely cured.

What greater Encouragement to labour for the Salvation of our Neighbour, than to know that our Labour will not be altogether uselefs ; that the Seed sown in this Life, which at present seems to be choaked with Briars and Thorns, will sooner or later produce Fruit ; that the Truth which Men now reject, will one day shine with full lustre in their Conscience? In short, that by labouring for our Neighbours, we labour for those who will hereafter be Members of the Universal Church ; that the good Examples we set before them, and all the Pains we take for them, will sooner or later have their desir'd Effect? And would not this be Reward enough, though there was no other?

We may likewise add, that nothing is so proper for *rectifying our Judgments*, concerning the *Dead* or the *Dying*.

Here the Sticklers for Orthodoxy will cry out, *That we are not permitted to judge* ; and yet, according to their own Principles, they cannot avoid judging. If they acknowledge no *Medium* between a sovereign Bliss and eternal Damnation, they necessarily judge that all who die, are either in one or the other of those Extremes. It is true, that in order to judge charitably, they bestow Happiness on almost all Men. But must *Charity* be opposite



opposite to *Truth*? And is it not an Injury to *Truth*, to assign the Crown of Righteousness to those, who have neither fought the good Fight, nor, perhaps, so much as entred upon a Course of Holiness?

Here it may be said, it wou'd be better not to judge at all. But, is a Man Master of his Judgments, as he is of his Words? Does not Evidence, as it appears to our Understanding, unavoidably determine us in our Judgments? If then we maintain as a Principle, that in the next Life, there are only the two Extremes of Happiness and Misery, shall we not be naturally induced to assign each Man the Place, that seems best to suit his Conduct here?

Upon this foot, they necessarily judge that Thousands of Creatures, who die with Dispositions contrary to Holiness, are eternally damned. It would be to no purpose to reply, that they pass no such Judgment; we may deceive ourselves, and fancy we do not judge; but the ground-work of our Judgments subsists, and necessarily follows the Evidence that results from our Principles.

Would we find out a sure Method not to judge of the Condition of the Dying, or to form only upright Judgments, conformable to Truth; let us judge that every one is happy or miserable, in proportion to his good or bad Qualities; and in so doing we can neither injure them, nor be deceiv'd ourselves; of which discreet Behaviour St. *Peter* gives us an Instance, when speaking of *Judas's* Death, he only says, that *he was gone to his own Place*.

Here then is a great comfort for Persons full of Charity, who would be grievously affected at the Eternal Loss of so many Millions of Souls. It is certain therefore, that the Doctrine here laid down, concerning *Purification* and *Restoration*, is better calculated than any other, for inspiring us with *Universal Charity* to our Neighbour, and rectifying our Judgments concerning him.

But if the first Part of it is comfortable, and proper to make an Impression upon generous Souls, the second

is no less fit to awake, by Motives of Fear, those Persons who can be affected only by Considerations of Self-Interest ; but as I have already touch'd on this Head in my sixth Letter, I shall be the shorter upon it here.

Is any thing more proper for over-turning the false Maxims, so much in vogue, in which Numbers securely lull themselves a sleep, than the knowledge of an *unchangeable Justice*, that constantly judges of things, as they really are ; and of a *Mercy*, which is so far from being contrary to *Justice*, that it concurs with it in the grand design of purifying Mankind ? This being laid down, what will become of the hopes of those, who imagine that Mercy will prevail against Justice, and stop its Course, so that they shall feel none of its Effects.

If GOD is incapable of *Anger*, *Provocation* and *Revenge*, as we have proved ; he is incapable of being appeased, of being moved with repeated Cries, or feeling Compassion \* like ours, which proceeds only from the Weakness of our Nature ; this being supposed, what will become of those flattering hopes, that we shall appease the Deity with Tears ; that on begging Grace and Mercy, he will be easily prevail'd on to relent.

If the greatest Favour, that GOD can do Men, is to *purify* them ; and if this is the only way by which they can arrive at Happiness ; how can they desire *Mercy*, to exempt them from Purification ? Could they obtain their request, they would obtain *Eternal Torment*, since without Holiness they will never see the face of GOD.

\* But how does this agree with the numerous Declarations in Scripture, concerning the *Compassion of GOD* ? Compassion in GOD, is different from that which Man is susceptible of. The latter proceeds from the Impressions which the Sufferings of his Fellow-Creatures makes upon him ; this proves painful, and presses him to relieve his Neighbour, in order to relieve himself. But in GOD, *Compassion* is essentially the same as his *Goodness*, joined to the Knowledge of human Sufferings, and his Purpose to render Man happy, by destroying the Cause of Sufferings. Hence it is easy to conclude that GOD is incapable of the *false Compassion* ascribed to him. A Father who through Weakness, cannot endure that his Son should undergo certain painful Operations, without which he cannot be cured, increases and lengthens his Misery by a mistaken Compassion.

If

If the Pardon and Absolution of the wicked Acts they have committed, cannot make the Soul happy, 'till the *Source* from which they flow is quite drained; to what purpose are so many reiterated Petitions, that have nothing more in view, but to obtain that Absolution; whilst Men give themselves no manner of trouble to root out the baneful cause of all their Misery?

There is not any one Illusion that lulls so many Men asleep as this; for say they, provided our Sins are pardoned, every thing will then be set to rights. Thus, if they do but abstain from the grosser Acts of Wickedness, they have but little Concern to rectify the Source of their Inclinations and vicious Habits, whose dismal Consequences they are utter strangers to.

But did such Persons know what they must suffer in the future Life, for having neglected in this the Cultivation of their Souls; could they conceive how bitter are the Fruits of this Negligence; they would consider things in another light.

One of the greatest Obstacles to Sanctification in this Life, is the *Love of Pleasure* and an *Aversion to Labour*. These two Propensities make Men live from day to day; indulge themselves in all the Pleasures they can find, and avoid every thing that is hard and troublesome: in short, in making the best of the present, without disquieting themselves about future Reckonings. But did they but reflect, that by all these delays they only make their Torment a thousand degrees more exquisite, and of longer continuance; they would certainly chuse a laborious Work of some hours duration, rather than Labours whose End they know not.

There is nothing we so industriously avoid in this Life, as to hear distinctly the Rebukes of Conscience; the far greatest part of our Pleasures and Amusements, are of no other use, but to deafen us in this respect: but did we know how dear this Repose will one day cost us; that the *Reproaches* which at present wou'd be supportable, will then be changed into insupportable *Remorse*; that they will be obliged to drink the whole bitter Draught, without the least pleasant Ingredient; they  
would

would certainly resolve to hearken to the Admonitions of Truth, what pain soever they might give them.

Nothing is so intolerable to most People, as to turn their Eyes from sensible Objects, to attend to Truth and Things invisible, to make the Objects of a *future State* in some sort familiar to them. But did they consider, that sooner or later they must endure an *entire Separation* from all those Objects that flatter their Senses; that the more they are attached to them, the more painful and insupportable will be the Privation of them: Did they know, that Truth will then be the only Food of the Soul, that it will prove exceeding bitter, and occasion extreme Anguish to all who have not been nourish'd with it in this Life; they certainly would begin to grow familiar with it, and abandon every Object that may hinder the relish of it. They would be constantly employed, in such Exercises as have a relation to those of a future Life.

Now what Consequences may not be drawn from the force of Habits; from the Torment we feel when they have taken root, and when an Attempt is made to pluck them up? And truly were we ever so little sensible of our real Interests, we should here find Motives strong enough, for setting about a Work immediately, which, if deferr'd, is not only render'd much harder than at first, but must likewise be attended with great Bitterness and Anguish.

Upon the whole, I know not whether any other System can be invented, that contains Motives so efficacious for engaging Mankind to walk in the ways of real Holiness; any System which can make Religion more venerable, in the Eyes even of Libertines, or more *lovely* to the Lovers of *Truth*; that places in a clearer Light, the wonderful Harmony of the *Divine Attributes*, and the Reasons we have to love sovereign Perfection.

If you find, Sir, that I have tolerably performed the Task you laid upon me, I shall be sufficiently rewarded for my Pains.

## *An ADVERTISEMENT concerning the following L E T T E R.*

*Although this Letter was not designed for the Press, yet it agreeing very well with the Argument in question, is the reason why it is here inserted,*

### *A L E T T E R to Mr. \*\*\**

**Y**OU tell me, Sir, that several Persons are much better pleas'd with the Fourteen Letters, on the account of the Treatise on *Restoration*, than on that of *Purification*; that the former Subject gives general Satisfaction, whereas the latter creates Uneasiness, and secret Apprehensions they cannot so well get rid of.

I am to tell you, Sir, that I was in the same Case, and was willing to persuade myself, that the *Restoration* might take place without the *Purification*. I found, however, that this System was too well connected to be divided; and that the same Arguments, which prove the Non-Eternity of Hell-Torments, by necessary Consequence establish the Doctrine of *Purification*.

One of those Reasons, amongst others, is that perfect *Equity*, which, must deal impartially with Men of the same Origin, and leave every Individual to reap the Fruits of what he has sown, according to the various and infinite Proportions that shall be found in them. The Idea of *Equity* supposes that of *Proportion*; and it is probable that the most Wicked will acknowledge the Divine Justice, in the proportion it will establish between them and good Men, and that they will never be able to complain, that they were weighed in an unequal Ballance.

Another way of conceiving the Matter, is, to look upon the painful Course of *Purification*, as a natural Consequence of the vicious Dispositions, Men carry  
with

with them to the other World, rather than as a Punishment, properly so called ; which, is fully illustrated in the Ninth, and following Letters : it is even a Consequence of Principles advanced in the first Letter on the Nature of Justice. If Justice has no other Tendency than to destroy *Evil* in Man, even by the Pains of Hell, must it not perform the same Office towards all ? Must it not eradicate *Evil*, not only out of the Wicked, but even out of the Good, that they may be qualified for a Re-union with their Origin. And if they cannot be compleatly happy, but by the utter destruction of *Evil*, doth not infinite Goodness itself contribute to the same Design ?

After all, Hell considered in this Light, is only a State of *Purification*, as the Author observes, although the Degrees of it are infinite. Whatever Name may be given to the thing, we are sure to find Consolation in this Idea, in regard to Persons we see die. We leave them to the place assign'd them by *Justice*, without forcing Charity so far, as to lodge them all in Heaven.

*Hell* again, in the common Acceptation of the Word, is too dismal a Place for any to be doomed to but the most abandon'd of Men ; now the distance between Heaven and Hell is too great, and the Idea of Proportion deeply engraved on the Heart of Man, never allows him to be satisfied with such Disproportions.

After what has been said, though these Reasons should not prove so satisfactory, though we could elude their force by specious Arguments ; I very much question, whether we can at all times persuade ourselves of the contrary ; a secret Apprehension often makes us dread, that the Consolation pretended to be taken from Scripture, is misapplied, and perhaps misunderstood.

All things duly considered, I think, that if those who will not admit of the Idea of a *Purification*, would but leave the Question in suspense, there would be less danger on that side, than in too great an assurance on the other, which may at last be attended by Mistakes.

*A Second* LETTER *on the Subject.*

S I R,

*See page 436*

THE Conversation you had with the *Foreigner*, who is charged with being a Deist, appears to me of great moment.

I am perfectly of your Opinion, that in spite of his Prejudices against the Christian Religion, he respects it in the main; and that if any one could shew it him such as it is, he would be obliged to make it reparation, and acknowledge that till then, he had known it only by its Phantom.

As the pretended Contradictions of Scripture, are the Phantoms that frighten him, it would be a great Point gain'd to clear them up; or rather, to make them disappear. I think the Book of *Letters, concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies*, very proper for that purpose.

There the Author assigns *ambiguous* Expressions, which give a handle to those Contradictions, their proper Places. He demonstrates, that the *True* cannot depend on some equivocal Terms, that it ought to be established on *fixed Principles* and *immutable Truths*. On these *Principles* his whole System is grounded.

He shews us, *That the Idea of GOD must be the Basis of whatever can be called Religion*; that the Idea of the Deity, includes that of the *Infinite Being*; that the Idea of the *Infinite Being*, supposes the *Infinity* of his *Attributes*; that the *Infinity* of his *Attributes*, supposes a *perfect Harmony* among them; that the Idea of *perfect Harmony*, overturns the vulgar Opinion, by which *Justice* is opposed to *Goodness*.

The Author shews that *Justice* is essentially no other than *perfect Equity*: that *Justice*, taken in this sense, perfectly agrees with *infinite Goodness*: that this *Goodness* requires that the way to Happiness be open to all free and intelligent Creatures: that *Equity* requires that each of those Creatures should be more or less happy,

more or less miserable, according to the use they shall make of their Liberty : that the Infinity of *Justice* consists in entering into *infinite Proportions*, in regard to the different degrees of *Happiness* or *Misery*, according to the different degrees of the *Good* and *Evil*, which shall be found in each Creature : that the Idea of *perfect Equity* is incompatible with that of *Revenge*, and a *boundless Revenge* on *limited* Creatures : that if *Goodness* and *Justice* ought to concur to the same end, the latter must be the contrary of *Vengeance*. \* That instead of keeping guilty Creatures in eternal Torment, it labours to secure them from such a state by the Pains it inflicts on them : that these ought to be *chastizing* and *correcting Pains*, fit for consuming *Evil*, and destroying it to the very *Root* : an *Evil* which of itself would render Man miserable, without supposing any other cause of his Torments.

On that foot, the employment of *Justice*, will be an employment of *Goodness*, an effect of *Mercy*, which is exercised on all Creatures, not excepting even the most culpable ; and which, by Operations proportion'd to the *Evil* they have contracted more or less voluntarily, at last brings them back to their *Origin*.

This Idea of the *Infinity* and *Harmony* of the divine Attributes is so evident, so agreeable to the most plain and *simple Notions*, that we must admit it, as soon as it offers itself. Every man would find it within himself, if he had not industriously thrown a Cloud over it from his Infancy, and substituted in its place an opinion of divine Justice, which can be satisfied only by eternal Torments.

Whence do we take this Idea ? From some ambiguous Terms of Scripture ; those Terms must be made to stand for first Principles. Who doth not perceive

\* We may, however, still say, with the Gospel, that GOD will avenge his Elect. A Father revenges the bad treatment one of his Children may have received from his Brethren, by inflicting on them chastizements proportioned to their fault ; but this sort of *Vengeance*, which is approved of by Justice and Goodness themselves, has no connexion with that which should pronounce sentence of eternal Damnation.



that the Opinion of eternal Damnation serves as a Hinge to the most difficult Disputes and most knotty Controversies? Without this, the Infallibility of the Church would fall to the ground, as well as that famous Maxim, \* which serves as a Bulwark to its votaries. *Predestination* and *Reprobation* would find no room in the world; the distinction of *Particularists* and *Universalists* would cease; all would be *Universalists*, in the properest sense of the Word; whereas those who now assume that fine appellation, are so only in a very limited and imperfect sense. If they admit the Ideas of *Impartiality* and *infinite Goodness* into their Idea of the Divinity, they rob him of the most essential of his Perfections, or at least set bounds to it. They suppose in GOD a *helpless Wisdom*, reduced to the necessity of abandoning his most perfect Work, and letting it perish eternally, for want of means to restore it. Thus likewise *Omnipotence* ceases to be such. GOD wishes the salvation of all Mankind; but cannot accomplish his design. What an Idea of Divinity is this! and what must *Universality* be, when established on such *Ideas*?

That of the *Particularists* is indeed less tolerable. To suppose an *Omnipotence*, which attains to its *End*; but whose *End* is reduced to the choice of a small number of Creatures for the enjoyment of happiness, and leaves the bulk of Mankind in eternal Misery. To suppose that *infinite Goodness* and *Wisdom* assent to this *Decree*, a Decree founded on the free Will of a Being, who is absolute Master of the Creatures, which he took from nothing: This *Idea*, it must be confessed, is still more surprizing than the other. It cannot be formed without horror.

The Followers of those two Parties, who, in the whole compass of thirteen or fourteen ages, have not been able to solve the Difficulty, have established the opposite Opinions on the same *Principle*; that of *eternal Damnation*. Both sides have held this as undoubted: They have never thought of enquiring whether a *Principle*, whose Consequences are *contradictory*, must not

\* No Salvation out of the Church.

be a *false Principle*\*. The Scripture says it in express Terms ; that is sufficient ; all enquiry would be superfluous.

But can the Expressions of Scripture stand for *first Principles*? At that rate, what must become of that number of Creatures, who are unacquainted with the Scripture? Must they be unprovided with *first Principles*? St. Paul, Rom. ii. might instruct us in this Point ; who tells us, that those who have not a *written Law*, have a *spiritual Law written in their hearts* ; and shall be judged by that *Law*. Without that *Law*, what could be the Grounds of their Condemnation?

Again, must even such as are in possession of written Revelation, be destitute of the *spiritual Law*? This is what no man will venture to advance. If the expressions of Scripture ought to stand for *first Principles*, to what purpose is the *spiritual Law*? All use of it would be destroy'd ; the Scripture would be placed in its room. The Author of the *Letters* observes, however, that the Scripture itself refers us to that *immutable Law* ; that it sends Man to it as a *superiour Tribunal*. O *House of Israel, are not my ways right*? Would GOD refer Men to a *false Rule*, for examining whether his *Ways* are *right*

\* It is really surprizing, that men have not once thought of going back to the source of so many contradictions. Build on a *simple, evident, incontestable Principle*, and the consequences will be entirely uniform. Build on a *false Principle*, the justest Arguments will produce the most irreconcilable Contradictions.

Let a *neutral* Person, who is not in possession of this key of a Restoration, hear two of the most able Divines dispute, one of them a *Particularist*, the other an *Universalist*; the more justly they reason, the more embarrassed he will be. He will find that each of them breaks in on some one of the divine Attributes: that they charge each other with that bold attempt, and that they have both reason for so doing. They might compose whole Volumes on this Article, without coming near one single Point, and that, as long as they build on the same Principle. What is this Principle? Is it *simple, evident, and incontestable*? Very far from it. It is a bare supposition, founded on expressions susceptible of different *Senses*. The *Choice* they have made of one *Sense* preferably to another, is what serves as a *Basis* to these Controversies. Ought this to surprize us? It is surprizing, however, that men have not sooner discovered the *Falseness* of a Principle, the consequences of which are necessarily contradictory.

or not? And may we not conclude with the same Author, that a *Rule to which the Deity submits itself, ought to be perfectly right, the work of his own hand?*

This right Rule therefore must stand for a *first Principle*: it must serve as a *Measure* for distinguishing the *True*: ambiguous Expressions ought to depend on it. Bare *Words* shall no longer be a Rule of the *True*: the *True* shall determine the *sense of words*. Such Expressions as are reconcileable to this *Rule*, shall be received in the *literal* sense: such as appear contrary to it, shall be esteem'd enigmatical: they shall be ranked among those *obscure* things, which can make no abatement in the *Force* of the *Evidence*.

This is the measure the Author of the Letters employs for explaining his Subject. It is evident that thus all Difficulties are removed, and the pretended *Contradictions* in the Scripture-Language disappear. It is likewise observable, that the Author is not reduced to the necessity of departing from the Letter, or doing violence to it in order to establish his System: that it contains Expressions, both more numerous, and more positive, than those brought for the contrary Opinion.

If I am not out in my conjectures, the honest *Deist*, who has been long quarrelling with the Scripture, will be cured of his Prejudices by reading those *Letters*. He will there find a System of *Religion*, perfectly agreeable to his own Ideas of *sovereign Equity*.

In that point of view, the disorder and confusion, which appear in the Universe, are no longer surprizing. The disproportion, which Providence seems to make between intelligent Creatures, ceases to be a proof against it. We see beyond this life *Scenes* much more considerable, where all will be compensated in the most exact proportion.

It is a mere Banter to talk of *infinite Proportions*, a *perfect Compensation*, as long as eternal Damnation is admitted. The Divines, who have used that Language without quitting their opinion, will not understand themselves. They have employ'd fine terms in justification of Providence, and to stop the mouths of Un-

believers. But those Gentlemen are not satisfied with them ; they have observed that the Lot of infinite Bliss, opposed to that of eternal Despair, among Creatures of the same nature, would destroy all *Proportion*? How is it possible to find in it even the shadow of *Compensation*? In this, it may be replied, that the Wicked will have received their *good things* in this life, and shall have their *evil things* in the next.

But the Wicked have likewise *evil things* in this life ; and though they be supposed in the most flourishing state imaginable in this World, what will be the consequence? Shall some few hours of false happiness enter into comparison with eternal Torments? What an Idea of *Compensation* is this!

Ought we to be surprized, after this, if Men, who have any tolerably just way of thinking, cannot bear a Language, so manifestly contradictory: If they are prejudiced against a Book, which is made to speak in this manner, and which ought to be a *divine Book*?

Should I enlarge on this Subject, I must necessarily repeat what the Author has already said on it\*. Permit me, Sir, to refer our *Deist* to the *Letters*. You will much oblige me by letting me know what effect they have on him.

## A L E T T E R to Mr. \* \* \*.

*Being a Parallel between the LETTERS and the DIALOGUES.*

**I**T would be difficult, Sir, to bestow the Prize on one of the Books, you mention, to the prejudice of the other, as I find them of different kinds ; and consequently it is not easy to compare them. You are sur-

\* See the twelfth and thirteenth *Letters*. The latter in particular contains solutions in justification of Providence, which are only mentioned here, and appear there at large.

These two following Pieces likewise afford us satisfactory Solutions.

*A Dissertation on the Nature of the divine Goodness and Justice, consider'd in their Origin.* p. 1.

*A Dissertation on the nature of Evil and its Duration.* p. 100.

prized

prized that in your part of the World, the *Letters* have more Partisans than the *Dialogues*. I assure you, Sir, that, all things rightly considered, I am not at all surprized at it.

The Author, or Authors of those two Works, though uniform as to the *Substance*, seem to me to have different *Ends* in view.

The Writer of the *Letters* has endeavoured to give a short sketch of the *universal Plan of the Deity, in regard to Mankind*. He rather views Religion from the *Designs* of GOD toward Men, than the Disposition, or, if you please, the *Indisposition* of Men in regard to GOD. He cannot indeed avoid mentioning the latter in several places; and grounds the necessity of *Purification* on the *Depravation* of Man. But then he shews the *End* in which all those *rigorous ways* will terminate. That *End* is so worthy of GOD, and so advantageous to Man, that we are charm'd with it as soon as we have a glimpse of it. Besides, this Plan is so agreeable to the most *simple notions* of *infinite Goodness* and *perfect Equity*, that we cannot conceive how we could think otherwise.

Christians for many ages have not dared to consult those *simple notions*. They have imagined themselves obliged to silence them, in order, as they have been taught, to submit them to the Decisions of the Word of GOD; that is, to *Words*, which were made the *Rule of Things*, and to which they are at last become Slaves.

Here Man is restored to the liberty of thinking, and giving room to evidence. He is no longer obliged to admit of things contradictory, or imagine he does admit of them. The Religion which is offered him, has no need of foreign authority for enforcing its reception. He finds the Principles of it engraved on the bottom of his own Heart.

The Mind of Man, formed for Truth, recoils at every thing that implies a contradiction: it is charmed with harmony and evidence: it must yield, when they appear. This, no doubt, is what engages the Reader's Judgment in favour of the *Letters*: Most men will remember they have frequently had the same thoughts.

in spite of the *Strength of Prejudice*. How much are we pleased with an Author who explains those *Ideas* and *Sentiments*, we had already entertained, and which we dared not allow their full play?

The Author of the *Dialogues* is in a different Case: His design was not so much to describe the universal Plan of Providence, by displaying the *Scenes* of the *Life to come*, as to *unveil* Man, shew him his *False*, and how little he is disposed to enter into the views of the Deity.

What satisfaction soever may be found in discovering the ways of divine *Wisdom* and *Justice*, as represented in the *Letters*; that discovery would be of little use, if we mistook ourselves; we should thereby be out of a condition of performing what was the design of our Creation. While we falsely imagined ourselves in the element of the *True*, we should be strengthened in the *False*, and in *Illusion*. Thus likewise we should prepare for ourselves the strangest *Misreckoning* at our departure out of this life.

It would therefore be a good office, while there is time, to assist Men in beginning, in this life, a *Work*, which sooner or later must be performed. This Work is the *study of themselves*, the distinct view of their real *Motives*; a view to be gained only by an attention to the dictates of *Sentiment*, and a *Flexibility* to the Impressions of *Truth*. This the Author of the *Dialogues* seems to aim at, through his whole Book; and if we follow him somewhat closely, we may perceive, he doth not shoot much short of his mark, not even in the digressions, which seem most foreign to the Purpose.

Several have bestowed the Prize on the *Letters*, for this reason only; because they are not loaded with such digressions: because the whole is carried on in a continued series; in a word, because we see at the first glance what the Author would be at. May not the reason for this different *Form*, be found in the very *Nature* of the things, which each of those Authors undertakes to explain?

The Writer of the *Letters* has given us a compendious

*Description* of the ways of GOD: The Writer of the *Dialogues* applies himself particularly to an account of the *ways of Men*.

The ways of GOD, consider'd in the *whole*, are *up-right*, *luminous*, and full of *Harmony*, in all their parts: Those of Man are *crooked*, *dark*, and full of *Contradictions*.

Hence it may be conceived, that it is easy for a man who has any key to the former, to reduce them to a regularly connected *System*; and exclude whatever is unworthy of so noble a subject, so compleat a plan.

But how was it possible to reduce to a *System* the *False*, the *By-ways*, and *voluntary Illusions* deeply rooted in man? Though it were possible, I doubt whether it might be expedient to attempt it. A piece so deformed, fully seen at the first glance, would become useless to men, by the aversion they would immediately conceive to it. If it be a good office to display their *False* to their view, it must be done imperceptibly, and by degrees, in such a manner as may give them an opportunity of being sensible of it themselves, and willing to own it.

Man is jealous of his *Liberty*. He rejects what you would convince him of in quality of *Doctor* or *Moralist*; but when he is witness of the ingenuous confession of one like himself, he is convinced by a secret sentiment, without perceiving that he himself is in the case. He cannot resist the force of *Truth*, the proofs of which he finds within himself.

These perhaps were the Author's reasons for giving his work so *original* a Form, instead of making it a *regular Treatise*.

If, as it has been observed, the serious pieces interspersed through the same Book, are penned in a more noble stile, than the familiar Discourses, the reason for this difference is easily assign'd \*. The serious pieces are

\* It would be ridiculous to write familiar Discourses in the same stile with metaphysical Dissertations. All we expect in the former is that they be natural, easy and unaffected; and that each Character be

are of a kind suitable enough to that of the *Letters*: They are so many *short draughts of the ways by which Truth manifests itself to man*. Here every thing ought to be noble and worthy of the subject. Here the ironical strain would be unseasonable: In the familiar Discourses, it is perfectly in its place: the False does not deserve to be attacked gravely; it is most effectually exposed, when imitated or ridiculed.

This, I confess, may be more offensive to such as shall see themselves in the picture whether they will or not. And who knows but this may be the secret cause why some persons are displeased at the too frequent digressions which interrupt the thread of the Discourse.† In reality, others have considered them in a different light: this pretended Irregularity seems to them not only a beauty, but even an opportunity for unfolding *Truths*.

You will now allow, Sir, that it is no easy matter to judge to which of those two works it is proper to give the *Prize*: and, that if some, without hesitation, bestow it on the *Letters*; they do not perhaps thoroughly enquire into the Cause of the Judgment they pronounce.

For my part, I should be tempted to think that even the *Difference* between these *two Works*, might concur to form something *complete* in the whole.

supported. It was once a commendation to say *a Man spoke like a Book*. Now it is a ridicule; and Men even value themselves on *writing as they speak*. Much more then, ought we to speak as we speak in familiar Discourse, especially in a Walk.

† Digressions are so natural in Conversation, that they cannot be banished from thence, without giving it an air of Restraint and Pedantry, insupportable to Persons of a certain taste.



THE  
S E Q U E L  
OF THE  
FOURTEEN LETTERS.

Concerning the STATE of SOULS  
separated from their BODIES.

BEING  
An ANSWER to a Book, Entitled,  
An ENQUIRY into ORIGENISM.  
By Mr. Professor R————.



## ADVERTISEMENT

*Concerning the following* LETTERS.

**I**T appears from the first of these Letters that there was at first no design of making a formal Reply. Several who have read the Book written by Mr. Professor *R* . . . . . have observed that it doth not weaken the Foundation of the System of a *Restoration*.

In reality, the strongest blow that Gentleman gives it, has no tendency to shew the *False* of it. He begins with bewailing the iniquity of the times, in which men dare publish a Doctrine, calculated for corrupting *Morals*, for seducing the World, and giving a free course to all kinds of disorders. He proves this by Examples.

He supposeth two Men, a Miser and a Courtier; “ one of them resolved to amass large Sums at any rate: “ the other as violently bent on making his way to Honours. Neither of them can gain his end without “ being guilty of Injustice, and Perfidy. The prospect of eternal Torments would be useful in stopping their pursuits. Remove this restraint, be assured, says Mr. *R* . . . . . they would immediately “ run headlong into all Crimes necessary for succeeding “ in their Designs. *Page 25.*

I leave it to any one’s judgment whether these examples are good proofs in the Case.

I should imagine, on that foot, that Perfidy, Violence, and all sorts of disorders which disturb Society, must be banished, wherever the opinion of a miserable Eternity is received\*. I should imagine, for the same reason, that if there be a corner of the World, where this *Restraint*, this motive to the fear of GOD, is ta-

\* Every one sees, that this Expression is somewhat extravagant; but it is suitable to Mr. Professor’s Supposition.

ken away, there we must find that Disorder, that *horrible Confusion*, mention'd by Mr. Professor. I should farther imagine that, if there are any particular men scatter'd through different Countries, who have thrown off this so powerful restraint, such men must be distinguishable by the Irregularity of their Morals.

I would fain know, however, what is the reason, why we see so many Gentlemen of the black Robe, that formidable Body, called Ministers of *Justice*, that endless train of *Proceedings*, that multitude of men, who subsist only on the Injustice done by one private person to another; I would fain know, I say, why we see these in Countries where this restraint is generally admitted. How shall we account for this?

We have here a *Miser*, and a *Courtier*, whose Injustice and Perfidy have been laid open by means of this *Body of Justice*. Were these two men become *Origenists*? Had they been seduced by that *deceitful Language*, which Mr. R . . . . . compares to that of the *Devil*? By no means. They were very zealous for all the points of the Religion of their Ancestors; eternal Damnation being one Article of it, they had no thoughts of renouncing it.

I set this Example in opposition to that advanced by Mr. R . . . . . and desire the Paradox may be explain'd.

If Mr. Professor answers, that Examples, founded on Suppositions, are not *conclusive*, I grant it. But then he must likewise allow that the Examples by him proposed are not *conclusive*; and that the whole first Chapter, which proceeds on such Suppositions, is not more *conclusive*.

It has been matter of surprize that he should begin his confutation in this manner. It was naturally expected he should first have examined whether the System of the *Restoration* is well or ill grounded: That, after this enquiry, he should have set forth the consequences which necessarily result from it. But he takes a contrary method. He begins with the *Consequences*; \* Consequences, which he founds on the Examples here

pro-

\* There are indeed some Opinions, the Principles of which are suf-

produced, and other equivalent Suppositions. From them he concludes that those Consequences are pernicious: that they are calculated only for throwing men into a false Security and Licentiousness.

This way of treating a Subject is, however, of some use in the case before us. The Reader, who, at the first glance, sees the pernicious effects, which the doctrine of a *Restoration* must necessarily produce, the *horrible Confusion* which would proceed from it, begins to be terrified.—He is already more than convinced of the falshood of this Doctrine: he has no need to know any more of it, or read the remainder of the book; or, in short, if he does read it, it is in this first point of view, which he carries with him to the end, and which helps him to discover demonstrations in every Page of the same Book.

It is not answered in the same manner. The examination of the Consequences, which must flow from either System, is reserved to the Conclusion.

*First*, it is enquired, whether the System of a *Restoration* is grounded on *Truth*, on *weighty Reasons*, or on bare *Conjectures*, as Mr. R . . . . . pretends.

*Secondly*, It is enquired, whether the Scripture *authorizes*, or *opposes* this System. In this enquiry, a Rule is employ'd, which Mr. R . . . . . himself proposes. The Texts of Scripture which seem either *for* or *against* it, are reviewed. Hence it appears that the Expressions on both sides are almost equivalent; and that the Scale still hangs even.

*Thirdly*, It is enquired whether any thing can be found that may give *weight* to the *Expressions*: whether there are not some *Truths*, which are *independent Terms*, and may thus help us to the sense of them.

The fourth enquiry is, what those *Truths* may be: and whether all men are obliged to receive them. The

sufficiently overthrown by a bare Enumeration of the Consequences: but then the Consequences must be evident and unavoidable. In this case, the matter is quite contrary: Mr. R . . . . . supposes Consequences, which are denied; and which are so far from being inevitable, that they are proved false by the Event.

last Question is resolved in the *affirmative*. This *Measure* therefore is used for explaining the sense of such expressions as seem contradictory.

*Lastly*, The Consequences resulting from this System, are examined. It is demonstrated, that the Opinion of a *miserable Eternity* is better calculated for throwing men into Remissness, than that of a *Restoration*.

All that remains is to know whether this be well demonstrated or not. The Reader must judge of that.

This being done, an Answer is given to an Objection, taken out of the Professor's Treatises, *viz.* *That it is not our business to set bounds to the divine Justice, or determine what would be just or unjust in GOD: that we ought to lay our Finger on our Mouth, &c.* This is the Subject of the fourth Letter, and at the same time concludes the Answer to the Professor's Book.

The Reader will find other Letters after that, which bear no relation to this Answer, though written on Subjects but little different.

He will observe that several parts of Mr. Professor's Treatise are passed by without any direct Answers. The Author of the *Letters* proposed only to defend the System of a *Restoration*; for which reason, he has attempted only to parry the *Blows* levelled at it. No notice is taken of such as are struck in the air, or fall short of the mark. Insisting on them would have been attacking Mr. R . . . . . which was not the design of these Letters.

Here it will be proper to give an example of what I am saying, otherwise it may be thought that this is only an evasion, for avoiding an Answer to the whole.

“ The Letter-Writer, says Mr. R . . . . . takes his  
 “ first Proof from the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST;  
 “ He thinks it of great force, if ever so little attended  
 “ to. By that he enobles all human nature, and becomes  
 “ the Brother of all Men. This Idea alone might privilege  
 “ us to presume that not one of those Men, whose nature  
 “ the Son of GOD has assumed, will perish eternally.”  
 To which Mr. R . . . . . answers thus: “ For my  
 “ part,

“ part, I think this Reason very weak. JESUS  
 “ CHRIST was made Man: He is become the  
 “ Brother of all Men ; therefore he will save them all.  
 “ Were not the *Levites* Brethren to the Children of  
 “ *Israel* ; and yet, when, after the affair of the golden  
 “ Calf, *Exod. xxxii. 26, 28. Moses* cried at the door  
 “ of the Camp, *Who is on the Lord's side ? let him come*  
 “ *to me ?* they left their idolatrous Brethren, and went  
 “ to him ; and when he had commanded them, in the  
 “ Name of God, to take their Swords, go through  
 “ the Camp, and kill each man his Brother, his Friend  
 “ and his Neighbour, they immediately set out, exe-  
 “ cuted his orders without mercy, and killed three  
 “ thousand Men. An action very extraordinary, and  
 “ mysterious\*, which shews that JESUS CHRIST,  
 “ the true High-Priest of the World, will likewise  
 “ have a Sword for punishing such of his unworthy  
 “ Brethren with death, as dishonour their heavenly  
 “ Father by their Sins.”

Let the Reader judge whether this Article has passed unobserved for want of a proper Answer, and whether this, and others of the same sort, are not what we call *Blows in the air*. I could produce others of the like nature, were I not afraid of swelling this *Advertisement*, by copying whole Pages. I shall confine myself to one more.

“ We know and teach, says Mr. R . . . . , as well  
 “ as these Gentlemen, that in GOD is neither Anger,  
 “ Fury, or any Passion like those of Men ; but then  
 “ we say that *Justice* is in GOD a constant Will of ren-  
 “ dering every one his due ; *Good* to him, who does  
 “ Good ; *Evil* to him, who does Evil.

Is this to be reckon'd a *Stroke in the air* ? That would be saying too little. It falls directly on the person who strikes. It proves exactly what the *Letters* lay down concerning *perfect Equity*, which proportions the Pu-

\* This Action doth not make it appear that JESUS CHRIST must punish his Brethren with eternal Death. Beside that an Action of the *Levites* is no Rule for his Conduct ; the Death they inflicted on their Brethren and eternal Damnation are two different things.

nishment to the *Crime*. I do not find in it the least trace of eternal Misery.

The Reader will observe others, that prove no more than this; and that no injury is done to the Author, by declining the consideration of them.

I come now to say one word to the Preface. On reading it a man would not suspect that Mr. R . . . . . designed to confute one single work; he seems to attack several Authors at once; one would not imagine his aim directed at the Book of *Letters*, till he tells us so.

“ It is my opinion, says he, that we ought to let  
“ these zealous Doctors see that we know, better than  
“ they do, how to practise the Rules of the Gospel-  
“ Morality: that we know how to render *Good* for *Evil*,  
“ *Blessing* for *Cursing*, and answer those, who injure  
“ us, with *Moderation*. I am satisfied I have done so  
“ in this piece. Page 11.

Any one who reads this, without perusing the Book of *Letters*, will be full of Indignation against an Author who should give occasion to such a return. Nor would he have less reason to admire the *Moderation* of Mr. R . . . . . who answers those *Invectives* only with *Blessings*. To confirm him in this, he need only confront the two works one with the other.

The Article preceding that last extracted, doth not give so favourable an Idea of this *Moderation*. It is grounded on a *Supposition*; and it doth not appear at whom it is levelled.

“ Men, says Mr. R . . . . . who though mere up-  
“ starts, are capable of insulting and abusing their  
“ Antagonists in words, would be very capable of mak-  
“ ing them feel the violence of their *Choler* by effects,  
“ if they had them in their power; especially as they  
“ already look on them with a sovereign contempt, as  
“ wretches almost destined to be Victims of the Devil.”  
\* Has this any relation to the work which Mr. R . . . . . undertakes to confute?

\* Has a work, whose visible Characteristic is universal Benevolence for all Mankind, any Connexion with the sovereign Contempt, which Mr. R . . . . . supposes?

Let



Let us put a more favourable Construction on Mr. Professor's Intentions. He does not mean, that the Letters contain foul Language, or Invectives \*. A Man must be a great Artist to find any thing of that nature in them. He certainly had some other Writers in view, while he was writing his Preface. It is surprizing he should add, that *his Answer is penned with Moderation*.

He probably considers all who do not admit of the Doctrine of a miserable Eternity, as a Body so closely united, that each Member of it is answerable for what the rest of them have published †.

When Mr. R—— is informed that it is he that brought our Author acquainted with ‡ the Works he mentions; Works which till then he had never heard speak of; he will be sensible, that these too are so many *Blows in the Air*.

## An ANSWER to Mr. R-----'s Preliminary Reflections.

**I** Have observed an Article, which serves as an *Exordium* to the *Enquiry into Origenism*; on which it may not be amiss to say a Word or two.

Mr. R—— sets out with reminding his Readers of the Menace of Death pronounced by GOD to *Adam* and *Eve*, if they should eat of the forbidden Fruit; and the Lye given him by the Devil, when he said, *You shall not surely die*. page 16. He afterwards com-

\* Mr. R—— elsewhere says, “ He is obliged in Justice to the Author of the *Letters*. to own, that he shews a great deal of Moderation.” This Testimony, had it been placed here, might have served as a Lenitive. The Reader would then have understood, that such Suppositions or Accusations do not in the least affect the Author.

† This is just as if a Writer, who doth not hold the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, ought to be answerable for whatever may be written by others, who reject that Article.

‡ The Works of Dr. *Petersen*, and other German and English Writers.

compares the Doctrine of a *Restoration* to this diabolical Language: “ Had not I reason to say, *concludes he*, that “ the Doctrine of those Gentlemen very much resembles the seducing Language of the Devil, *You shall not surely die?*” page 48.

Nothing could give more weight to Mr. Professor’s Confutation, than this Comparison. It might produce all the Prejudice he could wish against the Doctrine of a *Restoration*. But the misfortune is, that it is not just.

*You shall not surely die*; that is, in the Case in question, *No ill shall befall you*. Doth this affect the Author of the Letters? This Question is sufficiently answered, by the Description he gives us of *Hell*, in his eleventh Letter.

But says Mr. R—— *You suppose those Torments will have an end*. What a strange Supposition is this!

Tell a Man, who is passionately fond of Gain, that if he attains his End by Acts of *Injustice*, he shall be tortured with the *Stone*, or the *Rack*, a hundred Years; is this telling him, *No ill shall befall him?*

But says Mr. R—— “ If Men were persuaded, “ that, after some time of suffering, they shall be saved, &c.” page 23. The Term *some time* is *indefinite*. In the common way of speaking, it stands for a small number of Years. Doth the Author of the Letters speak of *Hell* under that Idea? Doth he determine the Number? After a Description of that *Hell*, he concludes thus:

“ In short, it may even be considered as an eternal  
“ Fire, or an Eternity of Punishments, in regard to  
“ what the Damned will undoubtedly feel in it; for  
“ we have abundant reason to believe, that, since the  
“ Scripture represents the Duration of their Pains as  
“ an Eternity, that Duration will appear such to  
“ them, not only by the number of Years and Ages,  
“ which it will swallow up, but also because the least  
“ Portion of Time will appear to them an Eternity.”  
Letter XI.

Doth this Language bear much Resemblance to that with which Mr. R—— compares it, *You shall not surely die?*

Perhaps

Perhaps Mr. R—— had not observed this Passage in the *Letters*; and the Idea of a *Hell*, which will have an end, presented to his Mind only a small number of Years. I should have supposed this, had not he himself clear'd up the Doubt. He explains himself positively on what he understands by the Words, *some time*. The Term, in regard of some, signifies a *thousand* Years, in regard to others, *two thousand, seven thousand, or fifty thousand* Years. page 115. This is his Idea of that *Hell*, which tends to lull Men into Security.

The Passage quoted from the *Letters*, mentions only *some Ages*; and *burning for some Ages*, did not seem to the Author a small Matter.

Mr. R—— however is not terrified at all this; he begins \* with *thousands* of Years, and goes on to *fifty thousand*. Is *burning* fifty thousand Years any thing, when compared to *Eternity*? As soon as you suppose an *End* to the *Torments*, you destroy all *Fear*; you lull Men to sleep by that seducing Assurance, *You shall not surely die*.

The Author of the *Letters*, considering the State of those who had rebelled before the Time of *Noah*, and who, according to *St. Peter*, were even in his days detained in the infernal Prison, thought that Idea so terrible, that when he mentioned the same Passage, he dared not venture on this Remark: so that, whenever he speaks of *Hell*, he doth meddle with its *Duration*.

But, in short, since Mr. R—— is of opinion, that the number of *fifty thousand* Years does not come up to the Idea of the Punishment which the Damned deserve; if, in order to engage him to allow an *End* of them, it be necessary to grant him a much longer Term, we would do it, without the least hesitation. Instead of fifty thousand, then, he may put a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand; if that is not sufficient, let him makethem up four hundred thousand, a *Million*; in fine, he may double the Number, provided he does but al-

\* In reality, when a Man is once accustomed to view an Eternity without End, he must reckon fifty thousand Years but a small matter.

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low an *End*, we will grant him what Number he pleases; at least, if we must necessarily chuse between that *Number* and *Duration without End*.

Mr. R—— having proved, that the Doctrine of a *Restoration* may do much harm, contents himself with calling it an *useless* and *curious Question*; \* which may very well be let alone. For this he appeals to the Author of the Letters.

“ Once more, *says he*, this is a Question of more  
 “ Curiosity than real Use. For this I appeal to the  
 “ Author of the *Letters* himself, who very well ob-  
 “ serves in his Preface, that *Questions of mere Curiosity*  
 “ *have no Tendency: they are of no use, either in Specu-*  
 “ *lation or Practice. Far from giving any Light into*  
 “ *the Obscurities or seeming Contradictions in Religion,*  
 “ *they produce new ones.*” page 31.

Doth Mr. R—— imagine, that the Author of the *Letters* has given the character of what he calls *curious Questions*, in order to conclude that of the *Restoration* one of that kind? It is extremely probable that he designed the

\* This now is the last shift for not admitting a Truth too evident. Let us not meddle with it; it is a curious Question, which we are under no necessity of enquiring into or determining. This being supposed, the Partisans of a *miserable Eternity* would be obliged to desist; for, in short, the Question is not less curious on the Affirmative, than on the Negative Side. The Affirmative is rather more bold; and it is well known, that he who affirms, ought to have more Proofs than he who denies. It is evident therefore, that Mr. R——’s Reproach must fall on those who have, for so many Ages, affirmed the Eternity of *Hell*.

If it be objected, that the Affirmative is the same in regard to the *Restoration*; I answer, that there is a wide difference between affirming, that a thing will return to its former Condition, and affirming, that it will be eternally in a violent State, for which it was not created.

The *Restoration* supposes nothing new, nothing foreign to the Nature of either God or Man; whereas *Misery without End* is equally foreign to both, and directly contrary to the design of the Creator. Even when God inflicts Punishment in this World, he calls it his *strange Work*, his *strange Act*. Isaiah xxviii. 21. Let any one judge now on which side the Affirmative is most bold, on theirs who suppose this *strange Work* will have an end, or on theirs who maintain it will never cease.

quite

quite contrary, as is evident from the Words immediately following those quoted by Mr. R——.

“ It might here be said, that the Truths contain’d  
“ in these *Letters*, are of use both in Theory and  
“ Practice, were it not more proper to leave that to  
“ the Reader’s own Judgment.”

The Author supposed he had established it in his sixth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Letters; \* and every Reader, who has Eyes, may judge whether he has done this by good Proofs or not. Mr. R——, however, appeals to the Author himself, on this head.

Mr. Professor’s Conclusion would have had more weight, if it had been preceded by an *exact* † *Confutation* of the Letters last mentioned.

## *A LETTER concerning the Book entitled, An Enquiry into Origenism.*

S I R,

I Have read the little Treatise which you was pleased to send me, and lent it to the Author of the fourteen Letters. As soon as I receive his Answer, I will communicate it to you.

You ask me, Sir, Whether this piece of Criticism is not strong enough to efface the Impression those Letters had made on me. Not entirely; for I think Mr. R—— has not yet shook the Principles of the Work

\* It is demonstrated in those three Letters, that the Doctrine of a *Restoration* justifies the Conduct of Providence; that it shews the Harmony of the Divine Attributes; that it clears up the Obscurities and seeming Contradictions in Religion; that it puts an end to the Differences among Divines; that it includes stronger and more efficacious Motives for rendering Men virtuous, than the contrary System. The contrary of this ought to be proved, before it is called a *curious Question*.

† When an Author designs to conclude against a Doctrine, which he finds established by Proofs, whether such Proofs are substantial or not, he is always obliged to overthrow them, before he draws his Conclusion. If this is not done, he runs the hazard of concluding alone.

which he undertakes to confute. He has certainly reserved his best Proofs for the second Volume, which he gives us hopes to expect; where he will follow his Author step by step, and pursue him into his last Retrenchments. He will be the more strongly moved to the Execution of that Design, as a second Edition of the *fourteen Letters* is lately published, with the Addition of *Notes*, and some other new Pieces, which may deserve a Confutation.

I think that, if Mr. R—— was disposed to make short work of the matter, and would confine himself to the Overthrow of the Principles laid down in these new Dissertations, he would bring the whole Work to the ground, by that single Stroke. Among these new Pieces, I reckon an additional Letter concerning a *Deist*, which Mr. R—— has seen, but not confuted. It contains a sort of *Analysis* of the whole System, and lays down the Idea of GOD, as the Basis of all Religion.

I am so easily disabused, that when I see the Chain or Connection, which makes the whole Strength of that Piece, entirely overthrown, I shall require no farther Confutation, but look on the Author as vanquished. On that foot, Mr. R—— will gain the Victory at a small Expence; and I think it would not be improper to propose that Expedient to him.

L E T T E R I. *from the Author of the fourteen Letters, concerning a Book entitled, An Enquiry into Origenism.*

S I R,

Y O U make me a Proposal in Mr. N——'s Name, of answering the Critic on the *fourteen Letters*. Should I undertake that Task, I ought to begin with returning the Civilities shown by Mr. R—— to an anonymous Author, whom he is under no manner of Obligation to treat so tenderly. But, as those ob-  
liging

ling Expressions ought to give me room to doubt of their being directed to me, I think I ought to decline the said Return. Besides, I think Mr. R—— doth not by his Book afford sufficient Matter for an Answer in form; since he has attacked only the Surface of the Work, and not attempted to sap the Foundation of it \*.

He does indeed set out with rendering the whole System suspected, by charging it with *Origenism*; and which is more, with favouring *Pietism*. This is sufficient for throwing a Mist over the most palpable Truths. At least it has its effect on the Vulgar; it is a compendious way of discrediting a Work, and will pass on great numbers of Readers for a Demonstration. The *Roman Catholick* Doctors are sensible of the effect the Term *Heretic* produces on the Minds of Men. Nor has that of *Pietist* less force with the Generality of Protestants?

One of the most singular Passages in the Book under consideration, is this:

“ I perceive, says our Author, that he, here and there, copies Dr. Petersein, word for word.” In return to this Remark, I can assure him, I never read one word of that Gentleman’s Writings.

I say the same in regard to the *English* Author, who, as Mr. R—— tells his Readers, has written a Treatise on this Subject, under the Title of *The New Gospel, from which the Origenists have taken the Doctrine of the Restoration*. page 26. I am obliged to our Author for this Information.

The first Edition of the Letters was in the Press, when I heard of a Piece written by Dr. Burnet T., in favour

\* The System of a *Restoration* is founded on *immutable Truths*, to which Mr. R—— opposes only some *Expressions* of Scripture. In return, *Expressions* not less formal are objected to him. Mr. R—— is therefore still obliged to prove a *miserable Eternity* by *immutable Truths*, more evident than those on which the *Restoration* is established.

*Note of the Translator.*

† In the Original I find a Note, which tells us this was a Son of the famous Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, whose Book was printed in

favour of a *Restoration*. I am surprized it has escaped Mr. Professor's knowledge. Here would be a new Adversary for him to engage, and one worthy of his Pen. But it happens unluckily, that the Epithet of *Pietist* would be of no service to him, against that Gentleman. He speaks with an Assurance which would startle Mr. R——; *Be assured*, says he, *that the Time will come, when the Doctrine of eternal Torments will not be less odious than that of Transubstantiation is at present among the Protestants.*

*I know not*, says the same Writer, *how the Doctrine of eternal Torments becomes so agreeable to certain severe and cruel Divines, who will not even bear that this Point should be examined.* Ibid.

What do you think, Sir, of Mr. Professor's Discourse on the Novelty of this Opinion?

“ If, says he, the universal Church could subsist  
“ without this Belief for above fifteen Centuries, might  
“ it not do so after that time?” page 33. “ I  
“ should think, says he in another place, that the Ori-  
“ genists ought to shew a Respect for the Judgment of  
“ the universal Church.” page 32.

This Language sounds something like Infallibility, and is more suitable to the Principles of a *Roman Catholick*, than to those of Protestants. What will be the Consequence? That when Evidence presents itself to the Mind, before we acquiesce, we ought to enquire what the universal Church has pronounced.

Mr. N—— will not perhaps own, that the Criticism on the fourteen *Letters*, has not shaken the Principles of them. I could easily demonstrate the Matter to his Satisfaction.

In those Letters, *immutable Truths* are laid down, as

1731. Here is a double Mistake. The Book is intitled, *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium*; and was penned by Dr. Thomas Burnet of the Charter-house. It was printed many Years before the Time here specified; but little known in the World till it was translated by Mr. Earbury, with Notes in opposition to the Doctrine of it. But few Copies of it were to be found; and it appears from the Preface, that the Author never designed it should come into many hands.

the



the Rule by which we may discover the Sense of the obscure, figurative, and ambiguous Expressions, with which the Scripture abounds. To this it is added, that when we meet with *Contradictions*, those Expressions only are to be taken *literally*, which agree with such *Truths*. An Enquiry is then made, whether the Idea we entertain of the *Divine Goodness, Wisdom*, and even *Justice*, can be compatible with the Idea of an Eternal Damnation. This is what Mr. R— ought to have proved.

He should have shewn that infinite *Goodness* can, without contradicting itself, consent to the Eternal Torments of an Infinity of Creatures: that Sovereign *Justice* requires it: and that in so doing it agrees with *Goodness*. Had he done this, he wou'd have begun to shake the whole System. Let us now see, how he gets clear of the matter.

“ The Author of the Letters, says Mr. R——,  
“ undertakes to prove that the *Non-Eternity* of Hell  
“ is grounded on those immutable Truths, which are  
“ the Basis of all Religion. He draws his Argument  
“ from the *Wisdom, Justice* and *Goodness* of GOD.  
“ Excellent Logic! Therefore the Torments of Hell  
“ will not be Eternal \*.”

This now is a compendious way of confuting an Argument. I leave the Reader to judge whether the following Pages contain any thing more solid.

“ The Author of the Letters, says Mr. R——  
“ finishes his Reflections with this pathetic Exclamation:  
“ *Can it be conceived that the Justice of GOD con-*  
“ *demns Millions of Creatures, form'd after his own Image,*  
“ *to horrible Misery, and that for ever? † What is more*  
“ *unjust,*

\* Nothing is more proper for obscuring a Truth, than making the Conclusion immediately follow a Proposition which is not explained. This, however, is of a Nature so evident, that it may even bear this Irregularity. Let us confront this Logic with that of Mr. R——.

GOD is *wise, just* and *good*; therefore the Torments of the Damned *will not be Eternal*——GOD is *wise, just* and *good*; therefore the Torments of the Damned *will be Eternal*. I desire to know which concludes best.

† He has suppressed the following Period. *But why do I say, to horrible*

“ *unjust, and more contrary to the design of the Creator,*  
 “ *than that an Infinity of Creatures should hate him for*  
 “ *ever? I repeat it once more; Can Sovereign Justice*  
 “ *will Injustice, or permit it to subsist through all Eter-*  
 “ *nity?* ”

This Interrogatory is somewhat strong, and therefore Mr. R—, *though he had several things to say on that Head, suppresses them, to make short.*

“ I shall content myself at present, says he, with  
 “ saying, I should not care to speak in so high a  
 “ strain.— When we are talking of the adorable  
 “ Majesty of the great GOD, is it the Business of  
 “ poor Mortals like us, to pretend to set bounds to  
 “ the \* Rights of the supreme Justice of the Judge  
 “ of the whole Earth? ” *Page 71.*

If this is not entirely satisfactory, it is at least a way for getting out of a scrape.

Soon after Mr. R— meets with the Solution, which he did not see at first.

“ If the Justice of GOD, adds he, did not allow  
 “ him to punish the Wicked with Eternal Torments,  
 “ wou’d his Wisdom have allow’d him to threaten  
 “ them with them? ”

This Argument wou’d admit of no Reply, did it not suppose the very thing in dispute†. Mr. R— wou’d have told us, this in the Schools is called begging the question.

But, now we are speaking of the *Schools*, what do you think, Sir, of the manner, in which Mr. R—

*rible Misery? We ought to add, to a hatred of GOD, to Rage, to Despair, to Blasphemy for all Eternity. May it not be said on the contrary, that the chief Employment of this Sovereign Justice, is to render just what is unjust, and make straight what is crooked? What is more unjust, &c.*

\* Unless by the Term *Justice*, Mr. R— means *Revenge*, the Expression of setting bounds to Justice is improper. We are speaking of *Revenge* without Bounds; not of *Equity* without Bounds. See what is said on that Subject in the third Letter, *viz.* that the Infinity of Justice, consists not in punishing *ad infinitum*, but in being infinitely equitable.

† The Question is, whether the Terms *Eternity*, and *for ever*, ought always to signify a Duration without End?

ridicules

ridicules the Argument brought for reconciling the *Particulars*, and *Universalists*?

“ The Author of the Letters, according to him, has borrow’d it from Dr. *Petersein*, (whom he never saw) and it is a matter of just surprize that that Doctor, who was a Man of Letters, should fall in to a way of Reasoning so grossly faulty.” Page 75.

Mr A——, before he produces the Theses or Arguments which reconcile the difference of the Divines, makes this Remark, *This is admirable, but is it equally solid? Hear what follows, and judge for yourself.* One wou’d expect he is going to demonstrate the *False* of it. No such matter. He falls foul on the form, and supposes somewhat ridiculous in it, which others do not discover. *This*, says he, *without lying, is an admirable way of reasoning.* This is sufficient for dazzling the Reader, and dispensing with a Categorical Answer. *This, without lying*, is an admirable way of clearing his hands of the Affair.

Let us now see the *False* of this Argument, wherein consists the ridiculousness of it?

“ In this, says Mr. R——, that their Adversaries will deny one or the other of the Premises of their Syllogism. What do they drive at? A *Particular*. \* will not admit the Minor, nor an *Universalist* the Major\*; thus they are in a fine way toward being reconciled.” Page 74.

This now is the ridiculousness of the Argument, that among a thousand Persons, who shall read this Work, a certain Number, with the Appellation of Divines, will be determined to maintain their own particular System to the end. Each of them, being firmly resolv’d to make no Concessions one to the other, will deny either the *Major* or *Minor*; and consequently the Conclusion will be null. In this Case, I desire to know who

\* This is not certain; and the contrary is evident from Experience. All the Divines have not taken an Oath, to adhere so firmly to their Opinions, as Mr. R—— supposes; there are some *Universalists*, who have made no difficulty of allowing the *Major*, without giving up the *Minor*.

will prove more ridiculous; he that aims at reconciling the Divines, or those very Divines, who are absolutely resolved never to agree?

It should be observed, that the Dispute is not here with one Adversary. No Divine is attacked apart, with a View of making him quit one Opinion, and embrace the contrary \*. Nothing like this is intended. Each of them is allow'd his Thesis. All here design'd is to make them sensible that they are not incompatible, that one of the Parties is in the right, and the other not in the wrong †.

But, says Mr. R——, in order to make what we call in the Schools an Argument *ad hominem*, the Person, against whom we dispute, ought to be convinced of the Principles of the Argument.

No doubt of it, when we dispute against *Peter* or *John*. To argue against such or such a particular Person, on Principles which he doth not admit, would be fighting with the Air. But the matter is quite otherwise in the present Case ||; the Argument is not address'd to Divines *alone*, much less Divines of one *Party only*; but to every Man capable of distinguishing the *True* of the *Principles* of the whole Work; and consequently of admitting the Propositions which result from them.

Another Remark, which Mr. R—— has certainly not made, and which wou'd have made the ridiculousness he sees, disappear, is, that there was no design of establishing the System of a *Restoration* on the different Opinions of Divines. It is founded on a more *invariable Basis*; as appears from the five, first Letters,

\* It is but too common a Practice in the Schools, to argue with this View only.

† For Example, *The Will of GOD is efficacious.*

GOD *wills that all Men should be saved.* Here now are two Propositions by no means incompatible, though they have been considered as such, for so many Ages.

|| A Man, who proposes an Argument to any Reader indifferently, is well assured before-hand that all will not admit his Principles. It is sufficient for him, that he advances only such as are well-grounded, and such as every equitable and intelligent Reader must be obliged to allow.

The Propositions already proved for \* reconciling the difference, which has subsisted so many Ages among Divines, are employ'd only in the *dernier Refort*.

This is indeed a very bold Attempt, and such as never was thought of in the Schools. Mr. R—— therefore observes, that *the Glory of this Work was reserved for the Origenists*. They will certainly value themselves on it, even though they proceeded against all Scholastic Rules. They are persuaded, however, that had Mr. R—— sooner perceived the Design and Spirit of this Argument, he wou'd not have been at the trouble of taxing it with *wretched Sophistry*, and then concluding with, “ See what happens to Persons, wedded to some new Opinion. All Proofs † go down; and the weakest appear to them, as so many Demonstrations.”

Is there any farther necessity of undertaking to overthrow the pretended Relation, that Mr. R—— would find between the Syllogisms, which he puts into the Mouth of a *Roman Catholic*, and those in question, *Page 75, 76*. The Invention is curious, as well as the Application, he makes of it to the Author of the Letters, which deserves to be quoted in his own Words.

“ What wou'd our Author think of a *Roman Catholic*, who should offer him such Syllogisms? I am satisfied he wou'd advise him to purge his Brain with some Grains of *Hellebore*; or at least wou'd not be able to forbear laughing in his Face, and telling him, you take me for a Simpleton.”

It is surprizing that some, who imagine themselves equally well acquainted with the Rules of true Logic, do not break out into the same Exclamation. But the Sophistry of such Syllogisms has escaped their Penetration.

\* For Example. *All these for whom JESUS CHRIST died, will partake of salvation. JESUS CHRIST tasted Death for all Men*

These two Propositions are proved in the first Part of the Letters.

† It has been shewn, that the different Theories of Divines, are not laid down in quality of essential Proofs.

I perceive what I have said bears the Air of an Answer. I had at first no other View than that of satisfying Mr. N— —, who thought the *Enquiry into Origenism* of some weight. This ought to be sufficient for disabusing him. But as he may complain that I leave several Articles still more essential behind, I believe they may furnish me with Matter for a second Letter.

## L E T T E R II.

**I** Grant, Sir, the Article, in which Mr. R—— seems strongest against the *Non-Eternity* of Hell-Torments, is that in which he reviews all the Passages of Scripture, that speak of *Eternity*, *the Worm that never dies*, *the Fire which is never quenched*. This may appear to carry the utmost force to such as know the Scripture, more by *Words* than by *Things*.

This difficulty was obviated in the beginning of the first Letter, where it is observed that the Scripture abounds with *figurative*, *ambiguous*, and often with seemingly *contradictory* Expressions. Whence it is inferred, that all cannot be taken *literally*. It is acknowledged, however, that some Expressions must be understood literally, as others are to be understood with restriction. This being supposed, a Choice and Distinction must be made in the Sense given to such or such Expressions. This likewise is done in one of the Letters; where it is said, *that Words can never be the Rule of the True; but that the True ought to determine the sense of Words: and that the True ought to be established on fixed Principles, on immutable Truths*. Letter concerning a Dist.

We must here remember, what was laid down in the first Letter concerning the grand Principles of *Eternal* and *Immutable* Truths, which are *independent* of *Expressions*, *Figures* and *Parables*, and which we find as it were engraved on the very *Substance* of our *Being*; to which the Scripture *bears Testimony*, but which *depend* not on the Scripture, because, were it possible for that Book to be lost, we should have no less Certainty of them.

them. Of those Truths it has been said that *they are not become true by Revelation; but were revealed because they are true.* Letter IX.

Mr. R—— does not pretend to prove the falsehood of these Principles.

“ The Author of the Letters, says he, lays down  
“ some Principles, which he judges necessary for a  
“ right Explanation of the Scripture. I cannot do  
“ better than imitate his Example. A first Principle  
“ which I here advance, and which the Author will  
“ allow me, is, that there is no real Contradiction in  
“ the Scripture.” Mr. R—— seems to forget that  
this is one of the Principles \* most strongly establish-  
ed in the Letters.

“ Hence, continues he, I draw this Rule; that  
“ when we meet with some Passages, which seem to  
“ overthrow certain Truths, proposed in a strong and  
“ decisive manner in other places, we are to give  
“ these Passages such a Sense, as doth not overthrow  
“ those Truths.”

I receive this Rule to a certain Point; but do not hold it to be infallible; that wou’d, at most, be only making certain Expressions yield to others more *strong* and *decisive*; *Words* wou’d still be the Rule of the *True*.

Let us endeavour to make use of this Rule, and see whither it will lead us.

Mr. R—— acknowledges, that the Scripture cannot be understood *literally* in an infinity of places: that we must make some Expressions give way to others. Some are proposed to him, which seem contradictory, and yet appear equally decisive.

On one hand, we have those of *Eternal Fire, for ever, always, unpardonable Sin, Impossibility of Repentance.* I here set down all the Terms, which Mr. R—— quotes, and the Scripture can afford us on this Subject, the greatest Force of which consists in the *always, for ever, and Eternity.*

\* When the Scripture seems to contradict itself in some Places. we are to take literally only what perfectly agrees with the fundamental and incontestable Truths. Letter I.

On the other hand, we propose the positive Declarations, that GOD *wills all Men should be saved*: that JESUS CHRIST *tasted Death for all Men*: that *he was raised up from the Earth, to draw all Men to him*: that GOD *doth not keep his Anger for ever*: that *he chideth not eternally*, &c. I pass by an Infinity of the same kind, several of which are produced in the Letters.

I now ask Mr. R—, on which side the Expressions are most *decisive*. He will undoubtedly say, those which establish the Eternity of Hell. But, I ask him, why they appear so to him? Whether the Words *Eternal*, and *for ever*, are no where employed in Scripture, when speaking of things now ended \*. He will be obliged to grant me this; he has already done it in his Book.

“ It is true, says he, that the *Greek* and the *Hebrew* Words, which signify an *Age*, *Eternal*, *for ever*, sometimes stand for an *unlimited Time*, or only for a *long Duration*, or all the Time that a certain thing can last. But, then the same Terms frequently and most commonly signify *Eternity* properly so called †.”

Very well. But can an Expression, which signifies sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, be *decisive*? It cannot be so in both Senses. We are therefore to determine in which of them it must be *decisive*. Once more, I ask Mr. R— why he takes *for ever* in the || Sense of *Eternity*, properly so called.

\* St. Jude says, that *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* received the Punishment of *Everlasting Fire*, v. 7.

† We every day repeat in our Creed, *I believe in Life Everlasting*. The Compilers certainly forgot to add, *I believe in Death Everlasting*. This Omission may, at least, convince us, that they did not look on that Article, as an essential Point.

|| The following Words are an Instance of the use of the Term *for ever*, being employed in speaking of Things now ended. Thus saith the Lord; *David shall never want a Man to sit upon the Throne of Israel. Neither shall the Priests and Levites want a Man before me, to offer Burnt-Offerings, and to kindle Meat-Offerings, and to do Sacrifice continually*, Jerem. xxxiii. 17, 18.

Nor



Nor have I less right to ask him, why the innumerable formal Declarations of GOD's *Design* to save *all Men*, ought to give way to that of everlasting Fire. He will tell me, as he has said in his Book, it is because the Expression of *all Men* is often used for signifying *many*, or Persons of *all Sorts*. I grant it, but even supposing this, the Words *Let none* and *all Men* being ranked in the same Class, one of them cannot give place to the other, as Mr. R—— pretends.

Here then are two sorts of Expressions placed in opposition one to the other, who shall judge which of them shall carry the Day? Perhaps, on a bare view of Terms only we shall find more and stronger in favour of a *Restoration* than against it. But even granting an Equality, what *Reason* shall turn the Scale? For, in short, we must have recourse to some *Reason*, since the Expressions themselves will be of *equal Weight*.

Hence it is evident, that the *Rule* proposed by Mr. R—— is insufficient; that we must have recourse to something more *invariable*, than Expressions, how positive soever they may be supposed: that, as has been already said, we must go back to *fixed Principles* and *immutable Truths*.

This is exactly what was designed in the first Letter. Mr. R—— must have mistaken the meaning of it; or he need not have given himself the trouble of turning the following Words into ridicule.

*I ask, says the Author of the Letters, what is the Foundation of the Proofs alledged for the support of the Eternity of Torments? Nothing but bare Expressions, to the number of three or four, an Eternity, a Worm that never dies, &c. How are the Proofs of the contrary Opinion supported? By the same immutable Truths, which are the Basis of all Religion.*

Mr. R—— by suppressing the latter Interrogatory, which serves as an Answer to the former, satisfies himself with bantering that first mention'd.

“ Here now, says he, is what we call Wit, and that  
“ of the most refined sort, which is employed in turn-  
“ ing things, which the most clear-sighted imagine they

“ see, to a Sense quite contrary to what they see. And  
 “ on what, continues he, is the Opinion of those  
 “ Gentlemen grounded? ”

The Answer was not far off, if Mr. R. . . . had been dispos'd to see it. He might have understood from the very Article, which he undertakes to confute, that the System of eternal Torments is supported by *Words*; whereas the contrary System is founded on *Things*.

All things rightly considered, we shall be oblig'd to come back to *Things*, to simple and clear Ideas, which cannot be susceptible of different Senses: We shall be sensible of the insuperable Difficulties, we shall meet with in making *Words* fight with *Words*, independently of the *Grand Principles*, which alone can give them light.

No Principle is so *simple* and *incontestable* as this, GOD is good. When we read this in Scripture, we do not receive it as a thing taught us by the Scripture, but as a thing which we knew before. The same is to be said of the *Equity* of GOD; the Testimony which the Scripture bears of it, gains our Assent immediately, a *Yes* or an *It is true*, beyond reply.

What doth this *Yes* prove? Do we say *It is true* of a thing of which we have no *Ideas*? It follows then, that we have *Ideas* of the *Divine Goodness* and *Equity*, independently of what the Scripture testifies of them; this is undoubted.

I ask, when any one confirms a thing to us, which we knew before, or unfolds the Consequences of things whose Principles were known to us, do we pretend to look for any Figure in the Words used? Do we make any difficulty of understanding them in a literal Sense?

When in the Scripture we read this express Declaration, GOD wills that *a'l Men should be saved*, is this any thing more than a Confirmation of that Principle, GOD is good; or, at least, a very natural Consequence from it?

Let us now see what *Reason* could hinder us from receiving those Words in their whole Extent, in the first sense they present to the Mind. Do we think such a Design unworthy of GOD? Would not the very  
 Idea

Idea we entertain of his *Goodness* dictate it to us? And doth not the Testimony, which confirms it, carry an infinite Consolation for every one capable of feeling an Impression? Doth it not find in him that *Yes*, that *It is true*, which leaves no doubt.

Again, I ask, when we read in the Scripture, that Men created after the Image of GOD, shall suffer in a burning Lake to all Eternity, do we find in ourselves any *Notion*, any *Principles*, of which a *miserable Eternity* can be the *Consequence*? As we take a nearer view of it, do we feel that Assent, that *It is true, this is just*, which Truth forces from us, even in spite of ourselves?

The Objection that might be made, that our Interest is much more concerned in acquiescing in the first Opinion, than to the last, is of no weight.

I suppose a Man secure of his own Salvation, and whose private Interest is quite out of the question; I ask, whether such a Person could seriously pronounce in favour of a miserable Eternity, without shocking every Notion within him. I speak here of all such as have not made the Prejudices of Infancy the Foundation of their Judgments. I cannot believe they would espouse what Mr. R.... advances concerning the Light of Nature.

“ All we can affirm with certainty, says he, is, That  
“ the Light of Nature seems rather to declare for the  
“ Eternity of Hell, than against it; because it tells us  
“ that Virtue ought to be rewarded, and Vice pu-  
“ nish’d.” page 37.

Very well; but doth it suggest to us that this Punishment ought to be *eternal*? It would be an Affront to the Reader to undertake the Confutation of this Thesis. The same Light of Nature, if not stifled, will do the business better than the strongest Arguments.

Proofs in this Case are so numerous, they present themselves to the Mind so naturally, that it wou’d seem a mere Banter to attempt to produce them. There is reason to presume that those who shall live in the

next Age, will be very much surpris'd that Men have been oblig'd to do it.

These Proofs are written in *large Characters* on every Part of Nature. The Author of Nature has not done this without Design; he himself sends us to that School. The most savage Animal takes care of its Young. The most hard-hearted of Men, sooner or later, shew themselves Fathers, to even the most ungrateful Children.

The Consequences arising from hence are so visible, that they would suffer from being particulariz'd; besides, we should inevitably fall into frequent Repetitions of what is already said in the Book of *Letters*; particularly in the Dissertation, which serves as an Introduction to that Work.

Its tendency is to shew that GOD, being essentially happy, is of course essentially *beneficent*; that, being *beneficent*, he could not produce Creatures from nothing, with any other View than that of making them happy: that, being supremely *wise*, he must have foreseen what would befall his Work, and the misery into which it might fall: that being infinitely *good*, he would not have produced an infinity of Creatures, had his Wisdom not found means for bringing them at last to *Happiness*, to the *End* of their Creation.

Here an Appeal is made to the Testimony of every Man, capable of thinking, whether, upon the supposition of his being able to produce *Beings* out of *Nothing*, without a Power of making them happy, he would not chuse to forbear such Creation. This Proof becomes still stronger by the Remark, which follows it in the introductory Dissertation; *viz.* that Men are born *miserable* before they become *criminal*; whence it follows, that if they were likewise born into the *Danger* of being eternally miserable, (which would be the Case of three parts in four of Mankind,) Brutes would be in a condition infinitely preferable. But I chuse to refer the Reader to the Piece itself, rather than give him any more Extracts from it in this place.

Though

Though such *forcible Reasons* were confirmed in Scripture only by the two or three Declarations, I ask, whether they would not be of more *weight* than certain *Expressions*, which might seem to import the contrary. But we are not reduced so low; so far from being obliged to do violence to the Letter, in order to make it speak in favour of an universal *Restoration*, it must necessarily suffer Violence in a thousand places before that Opinion can be eluded.

How much pains doth Mr. R. . . . take to avoid the most natural Sense that presents itself to the Mind, when we meet with the Passages which mention the *Salvation of all Men*, an *universal Reconciliation of all Creatures to GOD*, the Design proposed by GOD of being one day *all in all*, of shewing *Mercy to all Men*, of making the *Gift* more extensive than the *Offence*, of repairing through JESUS CHRIST all the Damage, which *Adam's* Disobedience may have done? I grant that the Words *all Men* sometimes stand for *many*; but what reason is there for taking them here in that limited Sense? I go still farther; we are so far from having a right to reduce the Term *all Men* to the Idea of *many*, that it is indisputable that the Word *many* frequently signifies *all Men*; and particularly in the present Question.

This appears from the Words of the Apostle. *As by one Man's* Disobedience, *many were made Sinners*; so by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. I ask whether the Term *many* doth not here signify *all Men*. *All Men* became Sinners by *Adam*: Therefore *all Men* must be made righteous by JESUS CHRIST\*.

\* It is matter of Surprise, that Mr. R. . . . should quote a Text for the Support of his System, which makes directly against him. He observes that, if there are several Passages, in which we find the Words *all Men*, there are others where we meet with the Word *Many*. He begins with that which says, JESUS CHRIST *has laid down his Life as a Ransom for many*. If for *many*, says he, it is not therefore for *all*. And to complete his Proof, he concludes with that above produced, *As by one Man's* Disobedience, &c. If Mr. R. . . . designs to persuade us that *all Men* are not to be made righteous through JESUS CHRIST, he must first prove that *all Men* were not made Sinners through *Adam*.

\* This is said in express Terms, Letter II

Were we reduced to the Necessity of proving the System of a *Restoration* by positive Declarations, this, among several others, would have no small weight; and I should desire Mr. R. . . . to let me know in what sense the Word *many* is here to be understood.

He would perhaps deal with this Difficulty as he doth with the Words *always*, and *for ever*. According to him, when the *Vengeance* of GOD is concerned, *for ever* signifies *Eternity properly so called*: but when we are speaking of the Duration of his *Patience* and *Mercy*, that Term signifies the Time of this Life.

“ Several Passages are objected, says he, where it  
 “ is said that GOD doth not chide *for ever*: That he  
 “ keepeth not his Anger *for ever*. What is to be done  
 “ in this Case? Are we to understand these Passages so  
 “ as to open a door to the Repentance or Salvation of  
 “ the Damned? This would overthrow the Doctrines,  
 “ which I have established. One Truth can never con-  
 “ tradict another. It is evident therefore that all those  
 “ Passages must be explained so as not to clash with the  
 “ Doctrines already laid down; consequently we must  
 “ give them a Sense, the Truth of which is confined to  
 “ the present Life, and this is not difficult.” *pag. 82.\**

A very satisfactory Doctrine, and such as affords us very exalted Ideas of the divine Goodness, Wisdom, and Mercy!

When we read what the Scripture says of that eternal Mercy, we should be apt to imagine it invariably the same; and that its Course could never be stopt by a different manner of existing; this, at least, is the most natural Sense that presents itself to the Mind, on reading these Words: *He retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy.* Micah vii. 18. *Thy Mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Thou † wilt not forsake the Work of thy own Hands.* Psalm cxxxviii. 8. But this is a Mistake; the Passage from this to the other

\* We plainly see this is not difficult.

*Note of the Translator.*

† Thus our Author reads the Text of the *Psalmist*. The English Version has it; *Forsake not the Works of thy own Hands*; which is more agreeable to the *Original*, the *Septuagint*, and *Vulgate*.

Life

Life is sufficient for cutting off all Hopes in that Mercy which endures forever: it has no farther Existence for a Person, snatched out of the World by an unforeseen Accident, perhaps in the Flower of his Age, before he was entirely converted \*: as soon as this Soul has quitted the Body, it ceases to be the Work of GOD, who abandons it for ever †.

Who is it that teaches this Doctrine, against the express Decisions of Scripture, and the clearest Notions of common Sense? 'Tis our Author, who has made no difficulty of asserting, that what the Scripture teaches us concerning the Patience and Mercy of GOD, must be confined to the narrow bounds of the present Life.

He goes still farther, and maintains that it would be impious to suppose this Mercy can be extended beyond the present Life.

“ GOD, says he, having sworn in his wrath, that he  
 “ will exclude from the heavenly Rest, all such as dis-  
 “ obey him obstinately; how dares any man venture  
 “ to promise the Wicked that GOD will perjure him-  
 “ self in their favour, and admit them into his Rest?

\* Let us suppose two Men in the Flower of their Age, who have spent their Youth in a loose and disorderly manner. Let us suppose them exactly in the same Degree of Dissoluteness; one of them is kill'd by a Stone: the other, who feels the fatal Stroke, awakes, reforms his Conduct, gives Proofs of a sincere Conversion, and dies some Years after in a Disposition very different from that of his Companion when he was taken off. According to the old System, one of them would be happy, and the other lost beyond all Recovery. Here now is an infinite Disproportion between the Conditions of these two Men. What is the Cause of this Disproportion? the Blow that fell on one rather than the other. From that moment Mercy can do nothing in favour of the unfortunate Man. Had the other been in his place, he had shared the same Fate. But what is a Blow, which has been decisive of an Eternity of Happiness or Misery? It is either Chance or Providence. Can we bear to think of the Consequences that follow?

† Nothing is so contrary to good Sense, as to limit the Divine Clemency and Mercy to the space of this Life, which is but the first Hour of Man's Duration. Shall a different manner of existing, put it out of his power to feel the Effects of a Goodness, which is eternally the same? Doth the Separation of the Soul from the Body make it cease to be the Work of God; a Work which he cannot forsake?

“ Is not such a Thought shocking? In reality, a man  
 “ must have a very strong stomach, to digest things so  
 “ hard.” Page 65.

As Mr. R . . . . in this place indulges the transports of his Zeal, he has not observed that it is possible to give him an Oath, on the other side, much more expressive and formal, recorded by the Prophet *Isaiab.* *I have sworn by myself, saith GOD, and the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not be recalled; that every knee shall bow before Me, and every Tongue shall swear by Me.*

I ask, which of the two Oaths is most solemn? *I have sworn in my wrath:* The very words insinuate that this Oath is not irrevocable; since GOD elsewhere declares, that he retaineth not his anger for ever. *That they should never enter into my rest.* But why must *never* here imply *Eternity properly so called?* Might it not signify a *long Duration*, an *indefinite time?* Mr. R . . . . reduces the word *for ever* much lower, when he restrains it to the present Life.

After this, is it highly injurious to the Deity to take literally a Promise made to all Mankind, confirmed by an Oath, where GOD swears by *himself*; to suppose a time will come, when all Creatures shall be brought back to the design of their Creation; a time when the *Blasphemy* of the Damned shall be changed into *Praise*, when every Creature shall do homage to the *Goodness* and *Justice* of the Creator; to suppose that this may be the *Restoration*, which GOD proposed by sending his Son? Is there any reason for crying out that *such thoughts are shocking: that a man must have a very strong stomach to digest things so hard?*

Mr. R . . . . has several other Ideas of the *Restoration* which JESUS CHRIST came to effect. Let us hear his own words on the Subject\*, Page 101. “ *John the Baptist*, says he, speaking of

\* Mr. R . . . . makes this Paragraph follow a long Article concerning the *Dissord*, which reigns in the World: but as the Question here turns on the *Restoration*, it was thought sufficient to quote this only.



“ JESUS CHRIST, and of the design of his coming,  
 “ says, *He hath his fan in his hand, and will perfectly*  
 “ *cleanse his floor.* And how is this to be performed?  
 “ By converting the Chaff into good Corn? No. *He*  
 “ *will gather the Wheat into his Barn, and burn the Chaff*  
 “ *with unquenchable Fire* \*. This is the *Restoration* to  
 “ be expected. The Children of GOD shall be fully  
 “ sanctified, and made subject to their heavenly Fa-  
 “ ther. . . . The Wicked (*that is, above three fourths*  
 “ *of Mankind*) sentenced to the bottomless Pit, shall  
 “ no longer be able to seduce or abuse them. Will not  
 “ this be a magnificent *Restoration*, and worthy of the  
 “ Wisdom, Goodness, Power, and Sanctity of GOD?”

Let it be observed, at least, that these are Mr. Pro-  
 fessor's own Words; for some might think this an Iro-  
 ny designed for ridiculing the pretended *Restoration*,  
 which he calls *magnificent*, and in which he makes all  
 terminate.

It is necessary to undertake a serious Confutation of  
 this Doctrine? I would desire no other Judge on this  
 occasion than a *Savage*. In order to make him such,  
 I would use an example suited to his capacity.

I would suppose a rich Man, Father of a large Fa-  
 mily, who, among a number of Children, had some well-  
 disposed and obedient, while the majority of them were  
 vicious, and created disorder in his house. What me-  
 thod does this Father take for re-establishing order in  
 his Family? After some severe Reprimands, he allows  
 his rebellious Children † a Month for amending their  
 Lives. They still continuing in their evil courses, the

\* It is plain that the *Baptist* doth not here speak of the *universal Re-*  
*storation*, but of the times of *Retribution* and *Vengeance*, which are to

precede it. In a *literal* Sense, he had the destruction of the *Jews* in  
 view; in a *spiritual*, the Fire of Justice which is to consume all In-  
 justice. If the *Jews*, whose Destruction he foretels, are to be restored,  
 doth not even that lead us to the Idea of a more universal *Resto-*  
*ration*? Besides, the Term *unquenchable Fire* amounts to no more in  
 this place than those of *always* and *for ever*.

† The longest Life, when compared to Eternity, is less than an  
 Hour, when compared to the longest Life. Judge then if there is  
 any exaggeration in comparing the present Life to one Month.

Father

Father enters on other measures: He orders them all to be shut up in dungeons, to be fed with Bread and Water, while his favourite Children enjoy Plenty, and live at their ease.

But the *Savage* will say, those dungeons are probably places of Correction, design'd to bring them to their duty; after which, the Father will receive them among their Brethren. No, say I, they are *Prisons*, from which they will *never* be deliver'd: The Father disinherits them *for ever*; he will hear nothing more in their favour; thus he re-establishes order in his Family. How! says the *Savage*; shall those unfortunate Children be allow'd but one Month for reforming their Conduct? Shall their Imprisonment never have an end? Shall there be no relief for them? Would that be just? And with what eye, continues he, can the other Children look on the desperate state of their Brethren?

The others, say I, will form Concerts of Joy, and praise the goodness of their Father, in providing so well for them. They will think of the *Misery* of their unhappy Brethren, only to give them a higher relish of their own *Happiness*. Would not this be a *magnificent Restoration*? and such as furnishes us with exalted Ideas of the Father's wisdom. I leave every one to judge what the *Savage* would think of it. But what would he think, should I add one Circumstance more to the account; and tell him, that this Father was able to reduce his rebellious Children to their duty: that he could thus have established order and harmony in his whole Family; that all this was in his power, but he *would not* do it? To this Circumstance, which can hardly enter into one's thoughts, all that remains would be to add *Eternity* instead of *Time*; this is, as to the substance, a just Idea of the System of the *Particularists*.

This surprizing Proposition, that GOD *could* \* *save all*

\* If it were proper for any to adopt the System of a *Restoration*, it certainly is so for such, as hold absolute Election and Reprobation. When we hear it said, that all Men are predestin'd, before their Birth, some to eternal Happiness, others to Torments for several Ages; we should

*all men, but will not*, is not unjustly charged on them; at least if Mr. R. . . . . is well acquainted with their System, as he certainly is. He makes this objection to himself: "Is GOD almighty? Can he not renew them, and give them repentance by the miraculous Force of his Holy Spirit? He can, without doubt, but he *will not*."

I doubt whether the Sticklers for this System can bear the sight of such an Idea. They will be obliged to have recourse to some verbal distinctions for palliating or extenuating what is insupportable in it.

The Doctrine of the *Universalists*, of those who maintain the Eternity of Hell, though defective, has yet nothing so shocking. GOD, say they, would that all Men were saved\*; but as he will not constrain their Liberty, he permits them to run into eternal Damnation†: that is, to speak plainly, GOD could not in all Eternity find means for reducing Men to order, in a manner consistent with Liberty; his *Wisdom* wants help, for succeeding in the attempt. In short, this is to suppose that the Deity hath an *End* worthy of perfect Goodness, but cannot compass that *End*.

Hence it is evident, that both Systems are attended with insuperable Difficulties: that they are incompatible with the Idea of the *perfect Being*. Accordingly,

should be surprized, and immediately ask, why so wide a Disproportion? However, when it is added that all shall at last be brought to Duty, the Mind would be comforted, though it could not be satisfied with the Thought. But when the Idea of *endless Duration* is joined to that of *absolute Reprobation*, it is hard to conceive what a Man must be made of, to bear such a Prospect; and we are obliged to suppose those who admit it, have never well considered it.

\* The Persons of this System, at least, do justice to infinite Goodness. They suppose the Invitation of GOD to Men sincere. But to suppose the *infinitely perfect Being* proposes a Design, in which he miscarries, implies a Contradiction.

† He certainly permits them to run into it; but the Question is, whether he will leave them there for ever: Whether his Wisdom will not provide them with some means for quitting that State; whether, supposing he has formed such a Design, he will not be able to execute it. See an Answer to this in the *Dissertation on the Nature of Evil*, &c, after the fifth of the *fourteen Letters*.

we see the Divines of both Parties accuse each other of injuring some one of the divine Attributes.

Does a Man do them an ill office, who endeavours to terminate their difference, and offers them a System, freed from those difficulties, which give the *Pyrrhonists* an advantage?

Has Mr. R . . . . reason to complain that we take part with the Enemies of Religion, by furnishing them with arms against it? Can a Man be said to oppose Religion, who divests it of what is *foreign* to it, or what renders it contemptible to such as know it only by the Dress with which it is disguised?

May not we find some sincere, well-meaning Persons, among those whom we call *Deists*, who have an aversion to Christianity only on account of the Contradictions they imagine they see in it? Are we not obliged to do something for such Men, if any such there be? While we do them this good office, we do it to others, who might suffer themselves to be prejudiced against Religion by them. But a stiff and rigorous opposition of their Difficulties would not be the most proper means for reclaiming them. It is not impossible they may sometimes be in the right; and an attention to what Truth they may say, is a duty which we owe ourselves. If they have attacked the Doctrine of the Eternity of Hell, without sufficient reason, and consider'd it as inseparable from our Religion, are we to be surprized at their aversion to Christianity?

I think, Sir, I have already said enough for defending the *fourteen Letters*, or, at least, for shewing they have suffer'd nothing from the Criticisms lately published by Mr. R . . . . .

#### P O S T S C R I P T.

NO direct Answer has been given to Mr. R . . . . 's Objection concerning the Passage relating to *Judas*, and that concerning *Matt. xxv. 46*. But I think what has been already said contains an indirect Answer.

It has been shewn that JESUS CHRIST died for all Men; Judas is one of that number: *that every Tongue shall at last give praise to GOD*; Judas cannot be excluded. Let us now consider in what Circumstances our Lord pronounces those words, *it had been good for that Man, if he had not been born*. Did he pronounce them *dogmatically*, in order to make of them what we call an *Article of Faith*, in order to inform us, without the least ambiguity, what will be the final state of the Damned? This is far from being the case. It appears here that our Lord consider'd the Condition of the Wretch who was on the point of betraying him: that, terrified at the torments he was to endure, he speaks in a manner conformable to the state of Despair, into which his Crime would throw him. And who doubts that the torments which Judas felt, made him wish a thousand times that he had never been born \*? If Job's extreme Affliction forced such wishes from him, is it surprizing that a Judas, who certainly knew not whether those torments would have an end or not, should actually prefer Annihilation to Being?

After all, though we could not explain the Sense meant by our Saviour †, when he spoke these words, what would follow? That the *Certain* cannot be shaken by the *Uncertain*; and that an *obscure* Proposition, in a *particular* Case, can never be allow'd good Evidence against *plain* and *universal* Propositions.

But our Lord says, *Matt. xxv. 46. The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

Here, we are told, is a miserable Eternity, opposed to a blessed Eternity; why must one be admitted with restriction, and the other in an absolute sense? It might be a sufficient Answer, that *Expressions* can never overthrow a Truth established on *fixed Principles*. The Punishment of *eternal Fire*, which consumed Sodom and

\* This notwithstanding, when Judas is once re-established, he may then own it was good for him to have received a Being.

† It would be ridiculous to ground our Reasonings on a thing we do not comprehend.

*Gomorrha*, might likewise be opposed to the Expression of *everlasting Punishment*. The former of these Expressions, opposed to the latter, may be sufficient for rendering it ambiguous. But, let us come to the Reasons which induce us to admit of a happy Eternity in an absolute sense, and a miserable Eternity in a limited sense.

The word *Punishment* join'd to that of *Eternity* has something contradictory. When we mention *Punishment*, we speak of a *violent state*, a forced situation, the *Cause* of which is accidental, foreign to the nature of the thing, and which consequently cannot endure to Eternity.

*Eternity*, join'd to a happy Life, is so far from implying any thing contradictory, that it is admitted without the least difficulty. The happy Life has always existed in GOD; it is as eternal as GOD Himself\*. There is no difficulty in supposing that what proceeds from an *eternal Principle*, exists *eternally*. But it is infinitely hard † to suppose the *Eternity* of a *violent Situation*, of which *Disorder* is the *Principle*.

Now let any Man judge what must be here meant by the Expression of *everlasting Punishment* ‡.

## L E T T E R III.

I Own, Sir, that there are several Articles in the *Enquiry into Origenism*, which I have passed by unobserved. I thought it sufficient to support or defend the Principles of the Work; and that I might easily be

\* If GOD has granted *created* Beings the Privilege of existing *eternally*, he certainly did so in regard to that happy Life, of which he is the *Principle*; not in regard to that State of *Punishment*, which is merely *accidental*.

† This is fully explained in the *Dissertation on the Nature of Evil*, &c. to be seen after the fifth of the *fourteen Letters*.

‡ A *violent State*, when of long duration, must appear a sort of Eternity to those so situated. 'Tis probably in this sense that our Lord calls it *eternal Punishment*. Mr. R . . . grants, that the word *eternal* sometimes denotes the whole time that a thing may last. I desire no other Explanation. The *Eternity* of *Evil* will be conformable to the nature of *Evil*: *Evil* is not *eternal* in its Origin; therefore it will not be *eternal* in its Duration.

excused answering such Passages as rather attack the Author than his Book.

Thus I have said nothing to that long Article, where Mr. R . . . . confounding Dr. *Petersein* with the Letter-Writer, attacks the first of those Authors on account of some Quotations from *Virgil*, which he says are not exact; and the Conclusion from which, by way of Reverberation, makes directly against those whom he styles *Origenists*.

“ I was of opinion, says he, that it would not be  
 “ improper to enlarge a little on this Subject, in order  
 “ to let the Publick know, from the Example of Dr.  
 “ *Petersein*, the great *Patriarch*\* of the *Origenists*, that  
 “ those Gentlemen are not nice in the choice of their  
 “ Proofs; for if he has dared to misquote a Pagan  
 “ Author, in the hands of every School-boy . . . .  
 “ ought not his Readers to be on their guard against  
 “ the Quotations produced from Scripture by him and  
 “ his Disciples after him?

The Conclusion, we see, is levelled at the Author of the *Letters*, who, according to Mr. R . . . . is Dr. *Petersein*'s Disciple. This is admirable! to be the Disciple of a Doctor whom he never knew†, either personally or by any of his Writings; and, which is more, to have borrow'd of him the Art of misquoting, &c. this is what no Man would ever have imagined.

What do you think now, Sir? Are these Articles

\* Writers will perhaps sometime or other leave off the unjust Practice of charging all those with the same things, who chance to think alike on certain Points, and who in other respects can have no relation one to the other.

Take this as an Instance.

The *Janfenists* believe absolute Predestination.

Mr. R . . . . believes the same.

Therefore Mr. R . . . . is a *Janfenist*; *Janfenius* is his Patriarch. Again, some one *Janfenistical* Doctor is not very nice in the Choice of his Proofs, and misquotes Authors to serve his Purpose.

Therefore Mr. R . . . . is likewise not very nice in the Choice of his Proofs, &c.

† This is not to be taken as meant against the Doctor: the Author would do him all the Justice he may deserve, with pleasure, was he acquainted with what regards him, by reading his Works.

such

such as deserve a Confutation? I say the same of the Explication he quotes from the Doctor, for which, without doubt, he makes his pretended Disciple answerable\*. I own I should have been but an untoward Disciple, so far as that Explication is concerned. A Man need not be a profound Logician, to discover the Sophistry of it.

I thought I might likewise pass over the Article which affords Mr. R . . . . so happy an opportunity of exclaiming. *Page 107.* Let us see on what Foundation he does it. He quotes the following Passage from the second Letter :

*This Separation of the Soul from the Body is not what the Scriptures call Death. They term it only Sleep; and particularly in the Chapter, where St. Paul speaks of the Dead only under the appellation of Sleepers, or those who sleep. But what they call Death, the Great Death, is the Disunion of the Soul from GOD. He ought to have added what follows; This Death was meant, when Adam was told that the day he should eat of the forbidden Fruit he should surely die.*

Here Mr. R . . . . is amazed; he is doubtful whether he is awake or not, or whether he ought to believe his own Eyes. He concludes, however, that the Author was asleep when he wrote this.

“ It follows therefore, says he, from our Author’s Principles, that all those who the Scripture says are “ *dead*, are disunited from GOD, are damned.”

The Consequence is wonderful. When we read that *Noah* and *Joshua* died, we are to understand that they are *damned*. Do you think, Sir, a Man is obliged to justify himself, and deny so ridiculous a Consequence?

It might be sufficient for me to ask Mr. R . . . . whether the Term *Death* hath not different Significations in Scripture? Whether when St. Paul says he hoped GOD would hereafter deliver him *from so great a Death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. he hoped he should not die corporally? Whether when our Saviour says, *John viii. 51.*

\* The Explication is this: *The Fire shall not be extinguished while Hell endures; but Hell will not endure for ever.*



*he who keeps his Word, shall never see death*, he had this bodily Death in view. If so, the *Jews* would have had good reason to reproach our Lord, and, taking those Words in a literal Sense, say to him, *Abraham is dead, and the Prophets are dead; who makest thou thyself?*

Under pretence that in the figurative Sense, the Term *Death* usually signifies *spiritual Death*\*, will it follow that there is some Mystery in the historical Sense, when it is said that *Abraham is dead*? I must own that there seems so little room for mistake here, that if Mr. R . . . had not obliged me to take notice of it, I should have pass'd it over in silence.

Is there any necessity of an Answer to that Article of the *Restoration of all things*? Mr. R . . . begins with the Remark quoted *Chap. 2d*, instead of *Chap. 3d*. He then quarrels with his Antagonist for not quoting the Passage at length. That might have been necessary, had we pretended to establish the whole System on that single Passage. It would then have been necessary to particularize the least Syllables; but there is no design here of using it as a Proof; it is only quoted by the way, without dwelling on it one moment. It is affirmed, that **JESUS CHRIST** *came to restore all things*. This is not cited as a Passage, but as a Proposition. It is added, that *this Restoration is mention'd in the Acts of the Apostles*; which is all that is said.

\* When our Lord says, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*, what could he mean? Did *Adam* die *bodily* the very day he eat of the forbidden Fruit? Our Lord says likewise, *he who liveth and believeth in me, shall never die*. It is probable he doth not here promise an Exemption from bodily Death. Nor is it less evident that bodily Death is expressed by *sleeping*, in the same Chapter which gives Mr. R . . . occasion to exclaim. In *1 Cor. xv.* St. Paul speaks of *those, who die in CHRIST*. And again, *CHRIST is become the first fruits of those who sleep*. He elsewhere says, *I would not have you ignorant concerning those who sleep*. In reality, the whole enquiry is, whether *bodily Death* is not frequently expressed by the Term *Sleep*; and whether *spiritual Death* is not as frequently expressed by the word *Death*? *Bodily Death* then is only a Consequence of *spiritual Death*: it is no more than a *transitory Accident* of it. So that when GOD speaks of his deceased Servants, he says they are *fallen asleep*. Mr. R . . ., would not have been so much amazed, had he observed this.

Mr. R . . . . takes a great deal of unnecessary pains to shew that this Passage doth not prove the *universal Restoration*. I am willing to grant it ; but what will he gain by the Concession, since it was not grounded on that Passage ?

I say the same of several other Passages, such as *Coloss.* i. 1. *Ephes.* xv. and more of the same kind, which are employ'd only *ex abundanti*, not as capital Proofs. Mr. R . . . . having laboured hard to prove what they do not signify, takes no less pains to prove what they do signify. If he pleases, we will give them all up, without fearing the Edifice will be shaken. I think I have demonstrated that is founded on *Things*, not on *Expressions*, the Sense of which may be disputed.

Mr. N . . . . . observes likewise, that I have left one important Article unjustified. According to Mr. R . . . it is dangerous to publish a System, *which may do so much Mischief in the world, and no Good*. This ought to have been made out. It is thought that the contrary is proved in the sixth Letter.

But, waving that Letter, I ask the Reader, whether the Spirit which runs through the whole Work, doth in the least lead Men to Irreligion and Security, as Mr. R . . . . . supposes.

“ Is it a small matter, says he, to do the office of  
“ the Tempter ; to destroy Souls, by weakening the  
“ motives to the Fear of GOD, and open a door to  
“ Remissness ?” *Page 27.*

It would be difficult to answer this Accusation, without repeating what has been already said in the sixth Letter. I rather chuse to refer the Reader to that Letter than transcribe it here. I might, with some reason, ask Mr. R . . . . whether he has read it or not. If not, I retract. We have seen Mr. R . . . . quotes it, however, as well as the fourteenth. See what he says of them.

“ They pretend, says he, that their System is better  
“ calculated than that of the Orthodox, for conveying just  
“ Ideas of GOD, of his Justice and Goodness ; for making Men  
“ love him, and serve him with  
“ Love

“ Love and Openness of Heart. The Author employs  
“ two Letters (the sixth and fourteenth) on this Sub-  
“ ject, where he labours hard to prove his Assertion  
“ by Arguments.” *Page 21.*

Mr. R . . . . therefore ought to have attack'd those Arguments. But has he done it? He takes a shorter way, and appeals to Experience. *To what purpose is it, says he, to argue against Experience?* *Page 21.*

The Proof is demonstrative. In reality, what wonderful Effects has not the opinion of a miserable Eternity produced among Christians, during the 1700 Years it has been preached, and the Belief of it professed? Mr. R — allows indeed that they are still wicked, profane, &c. in spite of that Persuasion. But he pretends they would be much more so, if this Restraint was removed.

“ Oh ! says he, may the Mercy of GOD never permit  
“ the Opinion of those Gentlemen to prevail in the world;  
“ it would soon produce horrible Confusion.” *p. 23.*

At this rate, Mr. R — appeals to future experience, not to the experience of what has already happen'd. The question is, what would be the Event, if the System of a *Restoration* should be received among Christians, as long as that of a *miserable Eternity* has been taught and believed. In that case we must wait sixteen or seventeen hundred Years; and then, by comparing the History of those two Periods, we shall be able to take Experience for our Judge.

In the mean time, it may be observed that the Experience of what is past is not a Prejudice very favourable to the *Thesis*, which Mr. R — undertakes to maintain.

Let us now enquire what Springs are most proper for putting Men in action, or restraining them.

Religion, it will be said, is one of the strongest, on account of the Motives of *Fear*, which it offers. It is well known what Impression *Fear* makes on the Mind. Now nothing is so dreadful as the Menace of eternal Torments. If, therefore, you remove that Restraint,

you deprive Religion of the power it would have had to check Men in their vicious Courses.

I readily own that *Fear* may do much with Men, and that if Religion was deprived of all Motives of *Fear*, it would make but little Impression on them. But then I maintain, that if this *Fear* is not grounded on the *Principles* of *Justice*, which Man finds engraved on his own Heart, it will have no *force*. I think it may not be improper to insert in this place, what appears in form of a Note on the sixth Letter.

*All things rightly consider'd, the most terrible Ideas, and such as make the strongest Impression on Men, are those, the Truth of which is perceived, and to which common Sense is obliged to subscribe. Every opinion, that proceeds from a false Principle, destroys itself; or, which is worse, produces the contrary of what is expected from it.*

Nothing that is over-strained, or seems exaggerated, strikes the Mind. Let a School-master tell his Scholar that his Father will hang him, if he doth not study; he laughs at the Menace: it is too much disproportioned both to his own demerits, and the Idea he entertains of his Father's Equity. Even Children have an Idea of *Proportion*: It is not in our power to efface it: we are never persuaded by what Men would make us fear, if it is *disproportioned* to what we are sensible we have deserved: Nor are we encouraged or satisfied, when flattered with what is contrary to the same *Proportion*. If *Sense* and *Evidence* do not confirm what is designed to be inculcated, we are never convinced: at most, we only imagine we believe it; it is no more than *Opinion*, that resides in the Brain.

Of this sort is the Opinion of a miserable Eternity. I dare be positive, that no Man is really persuaded of it\*.

\* Men are accustomed to the loose Term of *Eternity*; and those who profess to believe it, consent to it in a loose manner, without any Idea of what it implies. If the most zealous Partizans of this Opinion would seriously consider the meaning of *Duration without End*; would they begin with some Calculation, stop at the end of some thousands of Ages, and consider the state of those who have passed all those Ages

I appeal to the Conscience of the most profligate Men upon earth (for there are some Moments when even Men of that Character are forced to listen to Conscience) what sort of an *Hereafter* it would offer to his view. A terrible Retribution; which he will be obliged to own he has deserved. Let him, for example, imagine a hundred Years spent in Torments, or two, or three thousand, if you please; he will be so amazed and stupified, that he will not know where to stop; but will not dare to pronounce it unjust: he has no distinct Idea of the more or less\*. Let somebody come to him, while his Thoughts are thus employ'd, and tell him it is to no purpose for him to reckon Years, Ages, thousands of Ages, &c. that at the end of the Supputation, he will find a whole Eternity before him; I ask whether the Conscience of even such a Man would not be startled and shock'd at the Prospect: whether, instead of the *Yes*, which the strength of Truth forces from us, he would not feel within himself a determin'd *No*, a *That would be unjust; I have not deserved it.*

I am persuaded that Men, did they but consult their own Consciences, would feel the same Shock, both in regard to themselves and their Neighbour: for, in short, I suppose such as have no reason to fear for themselves, are capable of being concern'd for others; and I own I was not a little surprized at what Mr. R—— says on this Subject.

“ When we shall be in a condition of no longer fearing those Pains, it will be of little importance to us,

in Torments; and then ask themselves, whether it is possible that those miserable Persons should be no further advanced than they were the first day of their Sufferings; I am persuaded they would then be oblig'd either to turn their Eyes from such Objects, or allow that their loose Assent was very far from a Persuasion.

\* We can entertain no distinct and clear Idea of the *Duration* of the Punishment to be suffered; because in order to know that, we must first know the *Degree* of it, and we ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the *Nature* of the *Evil* which it is to destroy, before we can form a right Judgment of either. But when the question turns on *Infinity*, or *Duration without End*, every thing within us declares for the *Negative*.

“ whether they are eternal or not \*. What Concern  
 “ is it to us to know whether the Torments of Hell  
 “ will be eternal or not? Though we were certainly as-  
 “ sured they will not be so, of what use would that  
 “ Knowledge be to us?”

I ask, in my turn, whether it is of any importance to know the GOD, whom we profess to serve under the Idea of the *perfect Being*; under the Idea of a Being, whose Attributes are so far from destroying each other †, that they invariably concur to the same end: of a Being as *benificent as equitable*; all whose *Designs* are advantageous to Mankind, and who cannot miscarry in the execution of them?

Is it possible for us to pay sincere Homage to the *Justice* of a *partial* Being, who should weigh Men in an unequal Balance, who should place between Men of the same origin, the infinite disproportion of a happy and miserable Eternity?

Is it possible for us to admire the *Wisdom* of a Being, who through the immense Space of Eternity could not find means for restoring his Work?

Should we entertain exalted Ideas of a *Goodness* which should confine itself to a small number of Creatures, and consent to leave the greatest part of them in eternal Torments?

When we launch out into Praises of the great *Goodness* of GOD, and at the same time suppose that an Infinity of Creatures will never feel the Effects of it, to what is our Idea of it reduced? On this Supposition, I do not praise GOD as a Being *essentially* and *universally benificent*, but as a Being, who does ME good. When I admire the *Preference* ‡ which GOD gives me to o-

\* This Indifference would pretty much resemble that which has been supposed in those Children, who rejoice at their own Happiness, without giving themselves any Concern whether their Brethren are happy or miserable.

† It is impossible to reconcile Goodness with Justice by the System of a miserable Eternity.

‡ That is, if this Preference goes so far as to place between one Man and another the infinite Disproportion of a happy and miserable Eternity.

thers,

thers, and thank him for it, do I not tacitly praise him for being *partial*? In this case I do not admire a Perfection in GOD, but rejoice at the Advantage I receive from him.

All things rightly consider'd, whatever satisfaction a Man feels, who thinks himself thus favoured, it is not so secure but it may be disturbed. If the Benevolence of GOD is not *absolute* to all Men, who can assure me I am not one of those, who shall be excluded from it? For, in short, whatever share I imagine I have in the divine Favour, I may be one of those, who have been *illuminated*, have tasted of the *Celestial Gift*, and afterwards *relapse*.

In reality, if the *Soul* of Religion consists in a Dependence on the Deity \*, not in a *forced* manner, but by *free Choice*, I am of opinion that it concerns us to know him under Ideas different from those which the old System affords. In order to do that, there is no necessity of *inventing* or forming new Ideas; it is sufficient that we allow those already engraved on our Minds, to *manifest* or *offer* themselves †.

Again, if we are concern'd to know Religion under an Idea different from that of a *Chaos* ‡, we are concerned to be disabused of the *Eternity* of Hell.

After this, can we be *Men* ||, and look on the rest of Mankind with Indifference?

Let

\* Nothing is so comfortable as a Dependence on a Being, who wills our Happiness in an absolute manner, and is thoroughly acquainted with the roads that may lead us to it. But to depend on a Being, who perhaps doth not admit us into the rank of those whom he will make happy; this can be done only by force.

† Several, who have read the *Letters*, have experienced this. They have found that they *unfold* to their Minds the Ideas which they before entertained *indistinctly*, and which were as it were clouded with *Prejudice* and *Credulity* in the Doctrines of Men.

‡ The System of a miserable Eternity produces a most extravagant *Chaos*; it destroys the whole Idea of Providence, and leads us to doubt of every thing. Put that of a *Restoration* in its place, the *Chaos* is cleared up. *Harmony* and *Order* shine forth; if not in this World, we have a glimpse of it, at least, in the Scenes of the World to come.

|| Men of a *Benevolent* Character, who have cultivated Sentiments of Humanity in their Minds, feel an inexpressible Satisfaction in con-

Let us suppose a Citizen of a great City, who supposing it on the Point of being burnt, should, in conjunction with some of his Friends, be favour'd with the Privilege of being saved from the Flames; I imagine that such a Man, being uncertain of the Truth of the matter, should say to his Friends, *What Concern is it to us to know, whether it will be burnt or not, since we shall not be included in the Ruin?*

I do not pretend to charge Mr. R—— with Sentiments so void of Humanity. I suppose this Conclusion escaped him before he saw the Consequences of it. I have observed that, in his Preface, *Page 5.* he advances what seems to speak the contrary. “I am satisfied, “ says he, that all Christian Divines, not excepting “ those, who are the farthest advanced in Sanctity, will “ heartily say to those Persons, *Let the LORD do as “ you say, let him execute what you teach.*”

I think therefore, to proceed equitably, I ought to employ this Passage for rectifying the disadvantageous Impressions, that the opposite Language might produce against Mr. R——.

But since he is pleased to allow that it were to be wished all Men might be saved; I wou'd fain know on what he grounds the *Impossibility* of a Work so worthy of GOD, and so advantageous to Mankind. It cannot be on an *Impossibility* on GOD's side; for those Gentlemen maintain that *all Things* are *possible* to him. This being supposed, we must conclude that GOD *can* do it, but *will* not. Let us dwell no longer on this Subject, since it has been already handled.

Mr. R—— finishes his Conclusion by adding: “ Though we had a Certainty that the Torments

considering all Men, as destined to the Enjoyment of the same Happiness. It is hard for such as consider only a very small Number as *Elect*, not to conceive a certain Contempt and Aversion for the generality of Mankind. With how different an Eye do we look on Men, when we are assured that they will all, without exception, enter into the Designs of GOD on Mankind; Men, who, according to St. Paul, are *formed of one Blood*, and being the *Offspring* of GOD Himself, must at last necessarily be brought back to their Father. See what is said of the Love of our Neighbour in the fourteenth Letter.

“ of



“ of Hell will not be Eternal, of what other use wou’d  
 “ such an Assurance be to us, but to throw us into  
 “ Security?” *Page 30.*

Perhaps, the *Restoration*, were it considered alone and independent of the Torments which must precede it, might incline Men to Remissness; but it is impossible to separate one from the other. This is so true, that if we were to tell the most stupid that all Men shall be restored immediately after they quit this Life, without receiving the just Retribution of the *Evil* they have done, I am persuaded no Man cou’d assent to it, how much soever his Interest might be concern’d in believing it.

It is after the terrible Idea of a State of *Weeping, gnashing of Teeth, Hell* and a *burning Lake*, that the Idea of a *Restoration* is received, and is in its proper place. The more we are persuaded the Torments will have an end, the more we are convinced that each Man must bear the Punishment of his own Iniquity, and that in the most *exact Proportion*.

This has been proved in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Letters, in a manner, which leaves but little room for Security. I am of opinion that no Man will resolve to make a Trial of the Hell there described, under pretence that it will have an end. Not to mention the Hell, which regards only the Reprobate; is there any stronger Preservative against Security than the Idea of that Purification which every Creature must undergo, in proportion to the Degree of *Evil* which shall be found in him?

Mr. R.— in more than one place, speaks of the danger of leading to Remissness. Doth he not observe that he himself has done this by endeavouring to overthrow that Truth founded on the Idea of *Proportion*, and the very Nature of *Good* and *Evil*? He supposes he has really overthrown it; which I still doubt. It is evident, at least, that he attacks not one of the Principles which support it. The Reader need only peruse the 9th, 10th and 11th Letters, to be convinced of this.

See how he cuts the *Gordian Knot*. “ I have already, says he, overthrown this Supposition (speaking of the *Purification*) by shewing from clear and decisive Texts of Scripture, that after Death there is no room for Repentance, no more Sacrifice for Sin; that the present Life is the Time of GOD’s Patience, and consequently of Man’s Purification.” Here he quotes, *Rom. xi. 4. Page 67.*

He then concludes: “ I might add several things against the *Purification*; but that wou’d carry me too far: the Answer I have given, is of itself sufficient for overthrowing this whole System of Revolutions in the other World, which is built only on the warm Imagination of these Gentlemen.”

This is soon said; this is overthrowing a System with a single Finger. Several Persons will find their Account in depending on this Decision \*. Who knows but those, who suffer themselves to be amused in this manner, may one day find by Experience, that this System had a Foundation, very different from a warm Imagination; and whether they will thank the Doctors, who have so successfully flatter’d them?

I should pass for a Dealer in Paradoxes, if I said that the Orthodox System of the Eternity of Hell has been hitherto the most efficacious Snare for throwing Men into Security. But I prove it thus:

In what shall we make the Preservatives, given by GOD against Security, consist? Is it not in the *Ideas* of an *immutable Justice* engraven on the Mind, which renders to every one according to his Deeds in the most exact *Proportion*? In the Judgment pronounced by Conscience against all *Injustice* and *voluntary Illusion*?

Has he not added to this interior Testimony, that which the Scripture every where bears of the same *Just-*

\* The Author does not here speak of open and notorious Sinners; but of Persons, who believing themselves secure from Eternal Damnation, are over-joyed at persuading themselves, that there is no *Medium*, between this Hell and Paradise; whence it follows, that on quitting this Life, Paradise is infallibly open to them.

*tice*, which makes every one *reap* according to what he has *sown*?

Are not these the strongest Motives for a *well-grounded* Fear; grounded, I say on a *Justice*, from which we cannot fly, and on which we cannot impose?

But what is more proper for stifling this just *Fear*, grounded on the Idea of a *Proportion*, than the View of a System, which ranks all Men in two Classes at an infinite distance from each other; and which, while it supposes a *good* and *merciful* GOD, threatens eternal Torments, and leaves no Expectation of others?

This Idea of *Mercy*, opposed to the Menace of *eternal Fire*, either destroys it, or renders it useless. An Idea of *Repentance*, or recourse to that *Mercy*, immediately secures us from all *Retribution*. And how comfortable is it to be able to get rid of the troublesome Idea of an *exact Retribution* from *immutable Justice*, which will not hold the *Guilty innocent*?

'Tis by inculcating such a System, that Men are hardened against those *just Fears* imprinted in their Minds, by a secret Sentiment; they have been insensibly accustomed to silence those troublesome Thoughts, and substitute in their room certain Opinions grounded on Scripture-Expressions. No Pretence has been made, however, for removing a *restraint* so necessary as that of *Fear*; on the contrary, we have been presented with the most *terrifying Idea*, which can enter the Imagination; that of an *everlasting Fire*. Can any thing exceed this? No certainly; but what is the Consequence of it? As it is frightful or *inconceivable*, it affects no Man. No one thinks himself deserving of a Punishment, which cannot even enter the Mind; and as soon as it is determined that no other is to be expected, what is more easy than to take Courage against the secret Apprehensions which might make us fear the contrary?

Is it not evident then, that the Menace of *eternal Fire* is become a mere *Bug-bear*. It affrights Men for a moment; but cannot produce the least Effect either on the *Heart* or *Actions*.

Mr.

Mr. R— speaks of the horrible Confusion, which we should see in the World, if the Opinion of eternal Torments was discarded. I should be tempted to ask him, what sort of Confusion this wou'd be. Perhaps, he might say, of what are not Men capable, who are under no restraint from Religion or Fear\*? But 'it has been proved that the Opinion in question is more proper for destroying, than exciting a *just Fear*.

Let us consider the matter in another Light. Men are capable of two sorts of Disorder; a *gross* one, which appears by enormous Crimes; and a *secret* and *refined* one, hardly known even to the Persons guilty of it. I ask which of these Disorders will be remedied by the Opinion of eternal Torments? Not that *refined Evil*, which is coloured over with the Appearance of *Good*. Men in this Case are very far from having any thing to fear. It must therefore be the *gross* Disorder which this Menace stops. Very well; but supposing there was no *human Justice*, no Prisons, nor *Gibbets*, do you imagine this Menace wou'd have much Force over the Mind? While Men can privately encroach on the Rights of others, enrich themselves, or raise their Fortune on the Ruins of that of their Neighbours; I ask whether the Idea of everlasting Fire, proves a restraint to them or not. I do not here speak of profligate Sinners, but of such as pass on the World for honest Men. Perhaps, the Idea of an *inevitable Retribution* †, if they did not stifle it, wou'd produce some Effect toward restraining them; but as for *eternal Torments*, they are in good hopes of escaping them: some Acts of In-

\* Every one allows, that the Fear of Hell may serve to awaken Men, and keep them within Bounds to a certain degree; but the Question is, whether *Hell* ceases to be *Hell* the Moment we suppose it will have an *End*: Whether Torments endured many Ages, perhaps many Thousands of Years, are not sufficiently dreadful.

† If the Idea of the Punishments of the other World was grounded on the Nature of Things, on the essential Connection between *Moral Evil* and *Pain*, between what we *see*, and what we *reap*; it wou'd be impossible for Men to flatter themselves with Impunity: whereas the gross Idea of a Menace made by GOD, and which he may not put in execution, leaves them in a false Assurance, which stifles *true Fear*.

justice,

justice, of which we see so many Instances, can never deserve such a Punishment; besides Repentance, effaces all.

I would now fain know of Mr. R— in what consists the Disorder, which the System of a *Restoration* might occasion? I imagine some will look on the matter in a different light, and think it were to be wished that Men were brought to *Good* by a *well grounded Fear*. That they would learn to cultivate in themselves the Sentiments of *Justice*, which are the *Work* of the *Creator*, and which alone can lead them to *real Justice*.

### P O S T S C R I P T.

Allow me a Word or two on Mr. Professor's Conclusion.

“ I will venture to affirm, says he, that even though  
“ GOD had formed a Design of executing his Menaces  
“ of eternal Torments with rigour, his *Wisdom* would  
“ have engaged him to keep such a Design secret.”

But he elsewhere tells us, that, “ if the *Justice* of  
“ GOD did not permit him to *punish* the Wicked  
“ with eternal Torments, his *Wisdom* would not have  
“ permitted him to threaten them with such Tor-  
“ ments.” How is this to be reconciled?

Mr. R. . . . says likewise, “ that if GOD is pleased,  
“ notwithstanding his Menaces, to shew the Damned  
“ some Favour, it is a Mystery, which he has re-  
“ vealed to no Man.” Here he supposes the very  
thing in question \*. But in short what does Mr. R. .  
infer from this? the following Admonition, which is  
the Conclusion of his whole Work.

“ I would not, says he, advise any Sinner to defer  
“ his Conversion 'till his Death, much less till after  
“ his Death, and venture his Salvation on a *May-be*.”  
Was there any Necessity of writing a Book in order to  
come to this Conclusion? Or at least, was there any  
Necessity of confuting the Letters, in order to make his

\* This Mystery is revealed to those who find it both in the Language of Scripture and that of all Nature.

his way to it? Do they advise the contrary? The Reader may judge of that.

If it appears that the Work confuted by Mr. R. . . . carries in it the same Conclusion \*, more *naturally*, more *forcibly*, and more *incontestably*, one would be tempted to ask what can be the Tendency of † the Confutation before us.

## ANSWER to LETTER III.

S I R,

**I** Have read your last Letter, and shewn it Mr. R. . . . I was with him when he read it; and observed that how desirous soever he might have been of justifying the Principles of Mr. R. . . . he knew not how to do it. He was obliged to say on more than one Occasion, *This is evident; this admits of no Reply.*

However, having spent a little time in thinking on it, he said the Author was indeed strong in Reasons and Demonstrations; but that this did not prove he had Truth on his side: that we ought not to presume ourselves able to determine what would be *just* or *unjust* in the Conduct of GOD: that his *Ways* are not our *Ways*; that they are *incomprehensible* to finite Understandings; that we must lay our Hand on our Mouth at the sight of his Judgments; that St. *Paul* himself cries out, *O, the Depth!* in short, that it is sufficient for us to know GOD has decreed or determined a thing, for being assur'd it is just: that it becomes just by his ordaining it: that he was not obliged to give us an Account of his Conduct: that it is our business to o-

\* And other Conclusions, of no less importance; see *Letters* sixth, thirteen and fourteenth.

† If Mr. R. . . . had concluded with demonstrating that the System of a *miserable Eternity* is more harmonious than that of a *Restoration*, more worthy of God, more advantageous to Mankind, better calculated for clearing up the Difficulties and Contradictions which divide Christians; such a Conclusion, I say, would have given more weight to his Confutation.

bey, and not to attempt to penetrate into the Counsels of God.

I own that these Difficulties seem'd to me so strong, that I had not one Word to say in answer; and, if I may be allow'd to speak freely, I assure you, Sir, I am in some pain for you, and apprehend you will find it no easy matter to get over them.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

YOU have indeed some reason to be in pain for me; I do not flatter myself with being able to give a full and compleat Answer to the Difficulties propos'd by M. N. . . . this is an important Subject in Religion; and perhaps one of those which has been least explain'd.

Though there is something of the *True* in the Propositions before us, they occasion much of the *False*; or, at least, serve to colour it over. The Partizans of the opposite Sects make an equal use of them in their Disputes.

There is not one single Sect in which, to a certain point, Men will not lay down *Principles*, draw *Consequences*, prove what they advance, and oblige others to grant they have *Demonstration* on their side: but as soon as some Principle fit for disconcerting your *System* is offer'd, then recourse is had to the Maxims in question: they are very successfully employ'd for answering that we ought to cry out, *O the Depth! lay your Hand on your Mouth: The Ways of God are not our Ways.*

In reality, nothing is more proper for commanding Silence; and this manner of speaking, at first sight, seems conclusive. But as the same Maxims are equally used for maintaining both sides of the Question, there is reason to suppose they may be falsely applied; that these Propositions are in some particular Subjects applicable in an *absolute* sense and without restriction; that

in some others, they may lead us into mistakes, if employ'd in the same manner.

Thus, might it not be concluded that there are some Subjects in Religion, in which we may and ought to require *Evidence*? as there are others with which we ought not to pretend to be thoroughly acquainted; and that by a just Distinction between one sort and the other, we shall find the most puzzling Difficulties vanish?

We are first to enquire, what are those *first Ideas*, and *certain Notions*, on which we may build, and which we can never call in question. Here, without doubt we are to expect *Evidence*, or, to express my self more properly, hence it ought to diffuse itself on all the *Consequences*, which would necessarily flow from it.

If, after this we should happen to meet with some Subjects, on which those first Ideas could not afford us any *positive* Instruction, we should leave in *Obscurity* whatever is not clearly unfolded, or surpasses our Understanding.

By *certain Notions* I mean such as are *Universal*; which are the same in *all* Men, though not equally unfolded in *all*.

Men are pretty well agreed on certain general Notions, when they are not concerned to defend the particular System they have espous'd. Thus they will readily grant that the Deity being *self-sufficient*, could have had no other End in establishing Religion than the *Interest* of Mankind; that being pure *Goodness*, he can will only the Happiness of his Creatures: that being sovereign *Equity*, and consequently *impartial*, he cannot will the *Happiness* of some and the *Misery* of others: in short, that if he calls them all to Bliss on certain Conditions, he must provide them all with *Means* of performing them.

Chuse the most judicious Men out of all the Societies of the Christian World; they will not refuse to subscribe to these *general Notions*. They will agree: that they are the Dictates of good Sense and of Truth itself.

Press them a little more close; ask them whether  
the



the Revelation, which they unanimously admit, can be *contrary* to these *Notions*; or whether it ought to be conformable to them; they will answer that it must be conformable to them.

Go still farther; make them observe the *Contradiction* between the *System* which they have embraced, and these *general Notions*. They will sooner renounce them, than suffer the least Violation of their *System*.

In this fixed Resolution they will forget what they had before granted; *viz.* that *Revelation* ought to be conformable to these *universal Notions*. Thence they will proceed to set the former in opposition to the latter, and soon give it the preference. Some particular *Terms*, which they have consecrated, as proper for the Support of their *System*, must be made decisive of the *True*.

I need not go very far for an Instance of this. The Sticklers for *absolute Predestination*, have consecrated for their Use the Terms of *Electio*, *Vocation*, *Reprobation*, *previous to any good or bad Action*.

Place the most *simple Notion* of the *infinite Goodness* and *perfect Equity*, which they have admitted, in opposition to the Sense they give their favourite Terms. No matter: we must here *draw the Curtain*, and cry out, *O, the Depth!* Our *Notions* of the *divine Equity* and *Impartiality* may deceive us; whereas the opposite Expressions are decisive. *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*. We must stop here, and remain on the Brink of the Abyss.

The Votaries of the *Roman Church* are of the same stamp. The Terms which they have consecrated for their own Use, are the invariable Rule which determines the *True* and the *False*, *Salvation* and *Damnation*. All the Scripture says of the *Church*, is applicable only to their own: all it says of true Pastors, regards only their Doctors: the Elect are to be found only in their Communion. Confront this with the most simple Ideas of *universal Goodness*, and *sovereign Equity*, which cannot have *Limited*, or attach'd Salvation to one *Set* or *Party*; this is nothing to the purpose; *Here the Curtain is to be drawn: No Salvation out of the Church*.

Here we must stop : the Maxim is undoubted.

The Generality of Christians, who have hitherto maintain'd the Eternity of Hell, have likewise taken some particular Expressions for the Rule of the *True* ; such as *everlasting Fire, the Worm that dieth not*. These Expressions have been allow'd the Preference to the most simple Notions, not only of *Universal Goodness*, but even to that of *sovereign Justice*. In answer to this, tell them that the Idea of *Justice* and that of *Equity*, are but one and the same thing : that *Equity* requires a perfect *Equality*, or at least a full *Compensation*, an exact *Proportion* between the *Fault* and the *Punishment* : make them observe that an Infinity of Creatures culpable in some degree, such as *wild and barbarous People, &c.* cannot have deserved eternal Punishment. No matter. *Here the Curtain must be drawn* : the Expression of *everlasting Fire* is positive. We ought to adore the divine Justice in its Judgments, and not pretend to be wiser than GOD. Have not those Christians of different Countries, who have excluded all *Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans* from Salvation on this single Declaration, *There is no other name given unto Men, whereby they may be saved*, made the most simple Ideas of *universal Goodness*, and that *sovereign Equity*, which will render to every Man according to his Works, and judge every Creature by the Use he has made of his Knowledge ; have they not, I say, made them give way to some Expressions ?

What are we to think of the Contradiction between these two ways of speaking ? Which shall we consider as *true* ? That by which Men *unanimously*, and without hesitation, assent to the *same Truths* ; or that by which they prove *inconsistent* with themselves, for no other Reason, but the support of their own Systems, and without any other *Demonstration* than that equivocal Maxim, *We must lay our Hand on our Mouth, and not attempt to penetrate into the Decrees of GOD* ?

These Examples make evident what I before advanced ; that this Maxim, taken in a wrong Sense, gives those who make use of it room to settle and confirm

firm themselves in the *False*. Let us agree, that it is much more easy to perceive the *false Applications* made of it, than exactly distinguish the *true Use* of it. This is the nice and difficult Point.

Let us here recollect the *evident* Maxims on which we have said all Men are agreed, when not on their guard. It is necessary to enumerate them once more.

*First*, That the Deity, being *self-sufficient*, could have no other *End* in establishing Religion, than the *Interest* of Mankind.

*Secondly*, That, being pure *Goodness*, he can will only the *Happiness* of his Creatures.

*Thirdly*, That, being *sovereign Equity*, and consequently *impartial*, he cannot will the *Happiness* of some, and the *Misery* of others.

*Lastly*, That if he calls them *all* to *Happiness*, on certain Conditions, he must provide *all* with Means to perform them.

These Propositions are grounded on the Idea we conceive of the Divine *Goodness* and *Equity*. Must the Curtain be drawn over these? Must we here cry out, O the *Depth*! and add, that it is not our business to judge of the Equity of GOD? Are we sensible what would be the Consequence of all this? There would then be nothing certain, either in *Religion* or civil *Society*. If Men do not find the Rule of the *Just* within themselves, they will never be able to agree on any thing; they will have no *fixt* Principle to build on. This being supposed, the whole *Foundation* of the Security of States and Families will be destroyed: the *Laws*, which are essentially founded on the same *Ideas*, will lose their *Force*. What a strange *Chaos* would be the Consequence of this!

If we really find within ourselves the *Idea* of the *Just*, of whom do we hold it? Is it our own Work? If so, unjust Men would not find it within themselves. It is there however; and as soon as they vouchsafe to consult it, they find it as a Rule which corrects them.

But, in short, can we doubt that GOD is at the

same time the *Original* and the *Cause* of the *Just*\*? If he has been pleased to make himself known to Men by it, ought we to silence the Testimony, which it bears of itself, with this equivocal Maxim, That *the ways of GOD are not our ways: that we are not to set bounds to his supreme Justice, &c.*

But here comes an Objection. Is not GOD *incomprehensible*, purely because he is *infinite*?

I answer, that the Understanding of Man, though limited, has an Idea of the *Infinite negatively*. This Idea is *simple*; and though it infinitely surpasses his Understanding, he has a *Certainty* of it. The same is to be said of the Idea of *Eternity, &c.* Whence doth Man, born but the other day, derive the Idea of Eternity? he can hold it only of the *eternal Being*. These Ideas, so far as they are *negative*, may be called *Notions*. Whatever Name is bestow'd on them, they are not therefore less *real*: they are a sufficient Demonstration that the Understanding of Man, though *bounded*, entertains Ideas, which *surpass* it, and which ought to make him go back to him who is the Original of them.

To come now to the Idea of *Equity*: I say it is rather *negative* than *positive*†. The Term *Just* literally denotes neither *too much* nor *too little*: those of *Equity, Equality, and Proportion*, all stand for one and the same thing. It is evident therefore, that the *Equity* of GOD is one of the Attributes, which we most easily conceive‡: that

\* Man finds in himself Ideas which represent Perfections, of which he is not Master. He has an Idea of *infinite Goodness*, or *perfect Equity*. He himself is neither *good* nor *equitable*. Every Perfection of which he has an *Idea* only without the *Reality*, must reside in the Author of his Being.

† We have more exact Ideas of what is *unjust*, than of what is *just* in the *positive* Sense. We may, with more certainty, affirm that such or such a thing is *not just*, than we can precisely distinguish what *justice requires*. When a Tradesman or Artificer has employ'd his time and labour in serving a Man of Fortune, without receiving any Recompence, we readily pronounce that this is not just. Were we to determine the *Degree* of the Recompence he deserves, we could not judge of the matter with so much Certainty.

‡ It was necessary that Men should have more exact Ideas of the divine

that even what is *infinite* in it \*, doth not exceed our Understanding.

The Idea of *Goodness* is at the same time both *positive* and *simple*; consequently it is *invariable*. It is not in our power to doubt that the first Being is *Good*; we find in ourselves the Idea of a *Goodness*, of which we are not possessed; this Idea again refers us to the Original.

It is now time to speak of the Idea of *Wisdom*. Is it *positive* or *negative*? I answer, that it is partly both; but that Men can know it only by its *Negative* †. In that respect, they have an Idea of a *Wisdom*, which *cannot miscarry*, which foresees all things, and employs an *infinite* diversity of Means for attaining its *End*. Will they attempt to take a nearer view of it, all they *comprehend* of it is, that it is *incomprehensible*; or if they are rash enough to pretend to *penetrate* into what is beyond their *Sphere*, instead of finding *Evidence*, they meet with nothing but *Chimæra's*, which are the effect of their own Invention.

Here the Maxim, That *the ways of GOD are not our ways*, is perfectly in its place. *The Curtain must be drawn over the incomprehensible Springs*, which it puts

divine *Equity* than of the other Attributes of GOD; because that Idea is the true Foundation of *Order*. The Idea of *Equity* is stamp'd on all Men in so *ineffaceable* a manner, that it alone has an *unexceptionable* Authority over them. When Children complain of their Parents, Servants of their Masters, Subjects of their Prince; this is always done under pretence that they are not equitable.

\* The Term *infinite*, join'd to that of *Equity*, makes no addition to it. It is even improper. We say *infinite Goodness*, *infinite Wisdom*: we say *perfect Equity*, and the word *perfect* in this respect, signifies only the *Perfection of Equality*.

† The Question doth not here turn on the *Wisdom*, which appears in the Works of *Nature*; that is *clearly seen*, as St. Paul expresses it. *Rom. i. 20.* and though Men are unacquainted with the *Springs* of it in several respects, they know enough of it to make it the Subject of their Admiration. We are now speaking of that *Wisdom* which governs Mankind; a *Wisdom* which St. Paul calls *hidden*, which for arriving at its *Ends*, takes ways *unknown* to Men; which *disguises* itself from their Eyes so much, that they take it for Folly. St. Paul speaking of this *Wisdom*, says, that *the Princes of this World have not known it; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.*

into motion, and of which we know not the *particular Design*. Here we are to cry out, *O, the Depth!* Accordingly St. Paul's Exclamation is made on a Subject of this nature. He had, through that whole Chapter, been speaking of the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*: he had insinuated that the former were rejected only for a time: He had even declared, as a *Mystery*, that all *Israel shall be saved*. After which, considering within himself the *infinite Springs*, which the divine Wisdom must employ in the execution of that vast Design, he cries out, *O, the Depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33.

He had said, in the foregoing Verse, *GOD hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*. 'Tis a design so great as this, that made the subject of his Admiration; what he calls *unsearchable*, or *incomprehensible*, are the different ways employ'd by *Wisdom* for putting it in execution. He insinuates that on seeing it *act*, no Man would suspect the *End* it proposes; *Who hath known the Mind of the Lord*, saith he, *or who hath been his Counsellour?* v. 34\*. For, adds he, in the last Verse, by way of Conclusion, *of him and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be Glory for ever.*

Here I meet with fresh Proofs of a *Restoration* in my way; Proofs which I had not before in my thoughts. Doth this Conclusion, after what precedes it, leave us any doubt of GOD's design on all Men?

Before we can be persuaded that all *Men* will not return to their *Origin*, it must be proved that *all Men* did not derive their *Existence* from GOD; that they do not subsist *in him*. So too, before we can be persuaded that

\* In reality, Men of the same temper with those of former times (I speak chiefly of the *Jews*) and the majority of Christians at present, would have been far from giving such Counsel. The *Jews* thought themselves highly *injured* when *ranked* with the *Gentiles*. Such an Association would have appeared to them the greatest Offence that could be committed against them. The Christians of our Days are *scandalized*, when they are told that *all Men* are destined to be one day Partakers of the *same Happiness*.

*all Men* will not at last obtain *Mercy*, it ought to be proved that all Men were not *concluded in unbelief*.

You will be pleas'd to observe, Sir, that St *Paul's* Exclamation, which Mr. *N* . . . . presses against the System of a *Restoration*, is the same that brings me back to it. I doubt whether his *Objections* will appear to carry any great Force in them, after what I have here said.

If we ought not to presume ourselves able to determine what would be *just* or *unjust* in the Conduct of GOD, this concerns only the *Detail* of his Conduct, the *particular* Ends of which we know not; and this is comprehended in the means employ'd by infinite Wisdom.

But as to the *general* Ends proposed by the Deity, which must be grounded on perfect *Goodness* and *perfect* *Equity*, we may, without being guilty of too much Presumption, judge whether they are *just* or not. GOD himself invites us to make this Judgment.

He refers us to the *Rule* which he has fixed in us, for judging of the Equity of his ways. *Ezek. xviii. 25, 29.* So far is he from stopping Men's mouths, when his Equity is to be defended, that he pleads his Cause before them. *Micah vi. 1, 2.* He knows *he shall be justified.* *Rom. iii. 4.*

Mr *N*—— supposes a thing becomes just because GOD ordains it. Perhaps he has not well expressed his meaning. I think it might rather be said, that *he ordains it, because it is just.* Otherwise, what can be the meaning of all the repeated Testimonies which *David*, *Moses*, and other Prophets bear of GOD, when they say *his Laws are just*; that they are *established on Equity*? Do not these Expressions suppose that the *Just* and the *Equitable* subsist independent of his Laws\*? That Men have an Idea of them, and that they bear this Testimony of his *Laws* by the relation they find between them and that *Idea*. This Idea is as the *Origini-*

\* If it be allowed that no Man doubts of it, I desire no more; since the Supposition that *we cannot judge* what would be just or unjust in GOD, is grounded only on that Doubt.

nal in their Minds; the *Laws* are only a *Representation* of it.

I think it would be superfluous to enlarge any more on this Subject; it is fertile in Consequences; and I leave you and Mr. N—— the pleasure of deducing them more at large.

## ANSWER to LETTER IV.

S I R,

MR. N—— and I have read your Answer to his Difficulties. He seems to me satisfied with it; and desires I will let you know he has no farther Objections to offer, at least in regard to the *Enquiry into Originalism*; that is, he is of opinion that you have entirely confuted it.

However, he is not inclined to let you come off so. He finds you have laid down some Principles, the Consequences of which might deserve an Explanation. According to him, you have been too short on the Article of *Wisdom*. He maintains that you ought to have added two or three Pages to your Letter; and that you have not sufficiently enquired into the Causes which render the ways of *Wisdom impenetrable*, while there is nothing in the divine *Goodness* and *Equity*, that surpasses our Understanding.

Here, Sir, is Work cut out for you. If there is any Indiscretion in the Demand, I hope you will not make me answerable for it. I must own, however, that I am not displeased at Mr. N——'s being indiscreet; and perhaps, had he not been so, I should have ventured incurring your Censure on that score, rather than not engage you to give an Answer.

L E T.



## L E T T E R V.

*S I R,*

**I** Should have thought it an Injustice to your Penetration, as well as to that of Mr. *N*— to unfold the Consequences of the Principles I have laid down. I know not whether it may not be more difficult for me to do it in writing, than for you to see them at one view. I find my self but little disposed to attempt it; and therefore beg leave, by way of relaxation, to communicate to you a little Scene of which I have been Witness this day.

I went to Mr. *N*—’s, a famous Watch-maker of this City, in order to purchase a Watch. He was not at home; but I was told he would return very soon. I resolved to wait for him; and as I was walking in his Shop, I look’d on several Pendulum Clocks, and other Pieces of his making. His little Family and some neighbouring Children were diverting themselves with striking the Clocks, and Repeating-Watches; where-upon I undertook to ask them some little Questions, that I might hear them prattle.

I first ask’d them the names of those several Machines. To which they all replied at once, they were Clocks and Watches. What is the use of them, said I? They immediately told me, to shew the Hours. But, asked I, what is the use of that striking? The eldest of them answer’d, it was that People might know how the time pass’d in the Night. I farther enquired of those last mentioned, what was the use of the little Machine that hung at the end of the Chain. That is the *Key*, replied they, for winding it up every day at the same hour. Here, said I, are Children, who will soon know as much of the matter as their Father. They had no difficulty in believing me.

I then asked them whether they were acquainted with the use of several little Machines scatter’d on a Table. They boldly assur’d me they were; but when I

at-

attempted to press them a little farther on the particular use of each of those Machines, the Scene became diverting. Each of them told his Opinion, and began to support it with warmth. One would have it, that the Chain was a Necklace for his Baby: another, that one of the Wheels was made for his little Coach where it was wanting; in short, the smallest Machine on the Table found a place in the Brain of these Children, according to their different Inclinations.

The Dispute grew serious and warm; the Father came in, and put an end to it; neither of them gained his point, as he pretended. To conclude the whole affair, they were told they ought to be satisfied, till a certain age, with knowing what hour it is by a Watch, without troubling themselves about the Springs which put it in motion.

This Scene furnished me with matter for Reflection. I consider'd it as a pretty strong Emblem of what we have hitherto seen in regard to Religion. It made me recollect the Subject of my last Letter: and I even think it might suggest something in answer to Mr. N—'s last Difficulty.

He asks, why Men have more *certain* Ideas concerning the *general Ends* proposed by the Deity, than of the *Springs*, which *Wisdom* employs for attaining those *Ends*.

The Scene of the Clocks will give us some light into the affair. It appear'd that the Children, who acted in it, entertain'd just Ideas of the *general Design* of their Father's Works: They readily and unanimously answer'd the Questions relating to that only: Their Reply concerning the Use to be made of those Works was likewise very just. But, when they came to consider the little Machines, which are as it were the *Soul* of the *Clocks*, separately from the *Clocks* themselves; they did not comprehend what relation those different Machines might bear to a Clock. Being accustomed to see only the *Outside* or Surface of Clocks and Watches, their little Brains could not conceive the use of so many *hidden Springs*. They immediately look'd for such uses  
of

of them as were most within their own reach, and most material to them: nothing concerning them more than their Toys and Play-things, each of them pitched on that piece which was proper for his little Manufacture. Such as could not be converted to the same Use, were despised as so many useless pieces, as so much Trumpery.

I lately observed to you, that Men are agreed on *simple* and *universal* Notions: that they are unanimous in their answer concerning their Idea of the *supreme Goodness* and *Equity*: That they are divided only on the *Detail*, and the *fix'd* Resolution they have formed of adapting it to their own *particular Systems*.

Two Causes may be assigned for their Division: Their *Ignorance* of the *secret Springs*, which exceed their Understanding; and the *Resolution* of making use of them, at any rate, for the support of the opinions of their *Party*. While these two *Causes* subsist, how is it possible to reconcile Men? *Ignorance* alone would throw no Obstacle in the way; but *Ignorance* join'd to a *Presumption* of comprehending every thing, forms the most invincible Obstacle.

I should here be tempted to advance this Proposition; viz. that the generality of Christians have employ'd their whole Application in attempting to comprehend this *tail* of things, of which they ought to be *ignorant*, or which they ought to leave in *suspense*; while they have neglected such as they ought to *know*, or at least, have not taken care to *know them as they ought*, to know them by *Sentiment* and the force of *Evidence*.

All Men have within themselves the true Principles of Religion. These are those *first Ideas*, those *universal Notions*, mention'd in my fourth Letter. *Revelation* was not given with a view of rendering these first Notions useless; much less with that of contradicting them. Its Design was to refer Men to them, and explain them.

Had Christians made this use of Revelation; had they stopped at what it teaches, in conformity with these *Notions*; could they have resolved to be ignorant of the

*Detail*

*Detail* of an Infinity of things, or at least have left in *suspense* what is not clearly unfolded ; what Rocks would they not have avoided ?

The great Ends proposed by the Deity in regard to Mankind are very *simple*, and consequently within the reach of human Understanding. But the *Ways* taken by his *Wisdom* for attaining to those Ends, are *infinitely various*\*, and thus become impenetrable to a *limited* Mind. They are the *Thoughts* of GOD, raised as far above the *Thoughts* of Men, as *infinite* is above *finite*.

A Child or a Peasant knows the Sun is made for giving Light ; but they know not *how* it enlightens. They know the Eye is made for seeing, but are ignorant of the *secret Structure* of that Organ, which renders it capable of seeing. How many things are there, of whose Existence we cannot doubt, though it is not possible for us to explain the *How* ?

A Child may comprehend his Father's *Design* in his greatest Undertakings ; whether he proposes to build a City, to enrich it, or establish Laws to the advantage of all its Inhabitants. How important soever the Design may be, the Idea of it is *simple* enough, and contains nothing but what a Child may conceive.

The Case is not the same in regard to the Execution of it. That includes so great a *Diversity* of *Means*, requires a Foresight and a Wisdom so fertile in *Expedients*

\* St. Paul calls it a Wisdom *various* in every Way. The Diversity of the Ways of *Wisdom* has been shewn by the different Forms it has assumed in the different Oeconomies.

In the Oeconomy of Nature, it made itself known by *Nature* itself.

In the second Oeconomy, it was disguised, so as hardly to be known, by an Infinity of *Laws*, *foreign* to human Nature, and much more so by Orders seemingly *unjust*, but it was supported by so glorious an Authority, by so invincible a Power and Force, that Men in those times could not but see the *Finger* of GOD.

Under the Oeconomy of the Gospel, it took the contrary Form, or rather, appeared without *Form*, without *Grandeur*, without *splendor*, without *Power*, without *Authority*. It permitted its Children to sink under the violence of Persecution. This is what St. Paul terms the *Foolishness* of GOD, the *Weakness* of GOD, 1 Cor. i. 25. Could *Wisdom* be more effectually disguised than under the Appearance of *Folly* ?

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and *Contrivances*, that the Child can entertain no Idea of it. The Measures, which he sees his Father take, are so many Riddles to him ; he is quite bewilder'd by those which unite in putting several *Springs* in motion at once.

What particularly renders the ways of divine Wisdom impenetrable, is, that it frequently seems to turn its back on its *End* ; and yet that is the very way it *reaches* it. The sacred History furnishes us with Examples of this kind.

The History of *Joseph* is one. I shall suppose that during his Infancy, GOD had reveal'd to him his *Design*, the *End* he propos'd of making this Child the Deliverer of his Family. I suppose, I say, that GOD made mention only of his *End*, and not of the Ways he would take for leading him to it. I farther suppose, some particular Man, desirous of seeing all that should happen to *Joseph* ; that with that view he should undertake to follow him through all the Revolutions of his Life. He first observes the Hatred his Brethren bear him ; his Father's Tendernefs seems a Counterpoise to that. The Dreams, which he hears him relate, and which foretel his *Promotion*, confirm him in the Opinion that it will infallibly come to pass. And yet those very *Dreams* encrease the Hatred of his Brethren, and put them on selling him. Here our Man is bewilder'd.

He follows *Joseph* into *Egypt*, he accompanies him to *Potiphar's* House. *Joseph's* Success in his Master's Family begins to afford him some hope ; which entirely vanishes, when he sees him accused of a heinous Crime and imprisoned. What steps are here towards his becoming a *Deliverer*, and a *Deliverer of his Family* ? It seems lost to him, as he is to it : the time passes on, his Fortune continues the same. The Interpretation of the Dreams of two of *Pharaoh's* Servants, which seemed to tend to a Change in his favour, leaves him still two Years in Prison. At last, *Pharaoh's* Dreams begin to open a new Scene. *Joseph* becomes the Deliverer of a Kingdom ; but the main point is wanting. He still continues lost to his Family : he hears no news of them

in eight Years after his Promotion ; and his Father has now mourned for him nineteen.

*Jacob* on the point of his greatest Joy, finds his Afflictions doubled. The Famine is a Trifle to him : he is in danger of being deprived of Children: his dear *Benjamin* is taken from him, he has nothing to do but die ; and yet at that critical Moment, he passes from the bitterest Grief to the greatest Joy he had ever known in his Life.

Had we been Spectators of such a Series of Revolutions during the course of nineteen Years, should we not often have lost all hope ; Would not *means* so contrary to such an *End*, have puzzled and confounded us ? Now we have seen the *End*, it is easy for us to admire the *Ways* of Wisdom, which knows how to arrive at its Ends by *Contraries* and *Opposites*. We are forced to own that these thorny Roads lead to a greater Happiness: and that *Goodness* for that Reason allows us to travel through them. It appears then in this Case that *Goodness* and *Wisdom* concurred. But did *Justice* act in concert with them ? What *Injustice* did it not permit ? An innocent Person imprisoned like a Criminal ! But wait the Event : *Justice* will not lose its right ; it will more than *compensate* all the Sufferings of the Innocent, with a *Glory* which he had never acquired without these *Sufferings*. It will bring the *Agents* of *Injustice* to his Feet : it will make them feel the *Retribution* of their Violence by grievous Remorse : in short, they shall owe their Lives to him whom they would have killed. Can a more complete Compensation be imagined ?

This Account is satisfactory in the whole. It justifies the Divine *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Wisdom* ; and were we to be only bare Spectators of such a Scene, it wou'd be easy to admire it. But there are long Periods in Life, in which we find nothing but *Contraries*, without perceiving the *End* of them ; and in such Cases it is not easy to be willing to depend on a *Wisdom*, which we should be tempted not to acknowledge.

What

What this and such like Histories \* represent to the View *in little*, is what happens at *full length*, and the *End* of it is reserved for the World to come.

For the same reason, there are an Infinity of Particulars in the Conduct of Providence, which *to us appear unjust*. The greatest part of the Events related in the Scripture †, do not justify it. Profane History presents us with Tragical Spectacles, which give room for doubting whether the Deity regards what passes among Men. Nor does the sacred History furnish us with Difficulties less considerable. So many *Massacres* of whole Nations, not only permitted, but commanded by Divine Wisdom! How shall we reconcile this with the Idea of Equity? Were it allowable to quote a Passage from *Eloph*, it might stand for an Answer to this Question: *In all things the End is to be considered*.

The *End* will *unravel* all, and what has in this Life appear'd to us most contrary to the supreme *Wisdom* and *Equity*, will be the Subject of Admiration to intelligent Beings. We are not to judge of the *Cause* by *equivocal Effects*, of which we know not the *particular End*, but of the *Effects* by the *Cause* itself, of which we know the *general Design*.

This is the only Consideration, that can make us satisfied with so many Events, in all appearance unjust. This *general End* proposed by the Divinity, this *absolute Design* of bringing all Men to Happiness at last, is sufficient for making us easy; and though we cou'd not conceive the Connexion which such or such Effects

\* The History of *Moses*, those of *David*, *Job*, *Esiher* and *Daniel*, have in the whole some resemblance with that of *Joseph*. They are so many Pictures, or rather rough Draughts of the ways of the same *Wisdom*. All these were conducted to Happiness, through Roads which they wou'd never have chosen, and which on the contrary seem'd to carry them from it.

† The whole History of the Old Testament is full of such Events. We cannot, without Astonishment, observe the unheard-of Severity, exercised by the *Israelites*, by the Command of GOD, on all the *Canaanites* without exception; as also several others, where the Children are punished with their Fathers, Subjects with their Prince; where GOD calls one Generation to an account for what passed in the foregoing Age.

may have with the *general End*, it matters not; without comprehending them distinctly, we in the main conceive that *impenetrable Wisdom* can never lose sight of its *End*; and that what seems most *contrary* to the *End* proposed, helps to promote it.

Here now is the *fixed Point*, on which we may depend, and in which all terminates. This *Point of View* once removed, every thing falls to the ground: we have no longer any *certain Principle*: we lose the *Idea* of the *perfect Being* \*; every thing appears to us a Dream. For, in short, whatever efforts of Imagination we may make, will it be possible for us to think Events like those just mentioned, equitable, if we consider them separately from the *general Design* of the Deity to make all Mankind *happy*?

The Sticklers for the old System, pretend to justify the Equity of GOD several ways. They tell us in loose Terms, that GOD will justify his *Wisdom* and *Equity*, by a perfect *Compensation*. When they are pressed concerning this *Compensation*, when they are asked what this *unravelling* will be; they say, GOD *will be glorified by his Justice in the Damnation of the Wicked, as he will by his Mercy in the Salvation of the Good*.

Is such an *unravelling* sufficient for solving all the Difficulties, which present themselves concerning the Conduct of Providence? 'Tis certain that it is not in every Man's power to be satisfied with it, and that such *Solutions* are so far from making the Testimony of Scripture venerable, that they have produced the contrary Effect on several; on such, I mean, as require at least some *sort of Evidence*, something fixed, on which they may depend.

Ought this Disposition to be charged with *Irreligion* and *Rashness*? I think not. But it may be said, there

\* If we cannot depend on it, as on an undoubted Principle, that there is neither *Rage* nor *Cruelty* in GOD; that what to us seems so in his Conduct, will terminate at last in the Happiness of those Creatures, who have felt the Severity of them, what Idea shall we have of the *perfect Being*?



are several things in Religion for which we are not to require *Evidence*. I am of the same Opinion; this very Persuasion engages me to demand it in things which may be susceptible of it.

If I have no Evidence concerning the *essential Attributes* of the Dei y; how can I have any concerning the *Divinity of the Scripture*? and, if I have no *Certainty* that it is *Divine*, what obliges me to receive its decisions without *Evidence*? Shall I hold it to be Divine on the Testimony of Men? No, it may be answer'd; you shall know it to be such by the *Divine Characteristics*, by the *grand Ideas* it gives you of the *Justice* and *Wisdom* of the perfect Being. Very well; on that foot, I ought to have the Idea of *Divine* \* before the Scripture imprints the Character of it in my Mind. In like manner, I have an Idea of the *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Wisdom* of the perfect Being, since I am obliged to assent to what the same Scripture says of them. This is the *Evidence* I require. Is there any rashness in demanding an Evidence of this nature? If I am obliged to believe what GOD says, without a complete Evidence, I must at least be first assured that GOD has said it. In this Case, I shall have some sort of Evidence, on which I may depend; I shall judge of the *Uncertain* by the *Certain*.

But it may be said, it is not enough to *know* that GOD has *said* such or such a thing, we ought likewise to *know* in what *Sense* he has said it. Is not this kind of Evidence as necessary as the former? I think not. To pretend to have *Evidence* for all sorts of things, is the way to destroy the *true* one, that which ought to serve as the *Basis* of our *Judgments*.

If I do really know the Scripture to be Divine by the *Divine Characteristics* †, I shall consider only what relates to those *Characteristics*, as *evident Truths*.

When

\* We can know a Man by his *Picture*, only from the *Idea*, we before had of him.

† Nothing is plainer than this. It is natural that the Rule by which I know the Scripture to be *Divine*, should be the same, which

When it *seems* to speak a contrary Language, I shall take it for granted, that the *Certain* cannot be shaken by the *Uncertain*; that ambiguous Expressions cannot obscure Evidence; and, without giving myself any Concern for determining the *Meaning* of such Expressions, it will be sufficient for me to know, what they *do not signify* \*.

I will make use of the same Rule in all manner of Subjects, in proportion as they have more or less Evidence.

I will content myself with seeing those things in a *general* manner, whose *Particularities* I cannot discover. I will resolve to be *ignorant* of what seems to me *impenetrable*. I will attend less to the *Detail* and *Circumstances* than to the *Substance* of things; and without being surprised at seeming Contradictions, which certainly lie only in the Terms, I will fix my Eyes on the *general Design*, which never *varies*.

Do not the Divisions among Christians arise from their having taken the contrary Method? Had they been content with an Evidence of this kind, how many Controversies wou'd have been avoided? For, in short, they are grounded on *Expressions*, on Men's pretending to determine in what sense GOD hath said such or such a thing †.

serves to give me the *Meaning* of it. I know the Scripture to be *Divine*, by *Divine Characteristics*. Therefore, I will not ascribe to it any Sense contrary to those *Divine Characteristics*. For Example; The Scripture says, GOD *wills not that any one should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*.

It says, GOD *hardens whom he will harden: It is impossible that those, who have been illuminated, should be renewed by Repentance*.

Here now are two contradictory Propositions. I ask which of them bears a *Divine Character*?

\* For Example;

The Scripture says, *The Lord revengeth and is furious*, Nahum i. 2. It says elsewhere, *Fury is not in me*, Isaiah xxvii. 4.

Which of these two Propositions, taken literally, bears a *Divine Character*? What then; you will say can these contradictory Propositions signify? It is sufficient for me to know what they *do not signify*.

† JESUS CHRIST said, *This is my Body*. Here then is Transubstantiation.

I find, Sir, that your Objections, or those of Mr. N—— have insensibly led me farther than I designed to go. I am persuaded, it will not now be necessary to beg you wou'd both think, I have discharged the Task imposed on me. If I have not sufficiently explain'd the Subject proposed by Mr. N——, I leave you that Employment. Besides, there are some Truths here, of which it is more easy to perceive the Force, than to enumerate them as one ought.

*The Answer to the Fifth* L E T T E R.

S I R,

**M**R. N—— and I allow it is just you should be discharged. Your last Letter gives a wide scope for Thought. You are troubled with this on account of a small Curiosity which has seized us both.

The Letter concerning a *Deist*, which appears at the end of the Fourteen Letters, mentions a Conversation, which preceded it; but that is all it says of the matter. I think I have heard you say, you have seen an Account of it. If it is still in your hands, I flatter myself that you will be pleased to send it us. It is to be hoped, this will be the last Trouble we shall give you.

He said, *Thou art Peter, and on this Rock, &c.* Therefore the Pope is Head of the Church.

The Scripture says, *That G O D makes some Vessels to Honour, and others to Dishonour.*

Here then are absolute Election and Reprobation.

It says, *There is no Name, but that of JESUS CHRIST, by which Men can be saved.* Therefore, all Pagans, Jews and Mahometans are damned, and damned eternally; for it is likewise said, *That the Fire of Hell shall not be extinguished.*

## L E T T E R VI.

S I R,

**I**N Consideration of the Promise you make me, and which I beg you will remember; I send you the Account you desire, which, as you will see, employs two Letters. Several Persons have seem'd to wish they had been published with the other Letter concerning the *Deist*. That wou'd have been natural, as these were written first.

Some, perhaps, will be of opinion that these Letters, which are in the historical way, wou'd have been foreign to the Work; whereas that, which has appear'd at the end of it, is a sort of *Analysis*, which is so far from carrying the Reader from the Subject, that it collects the whole System, as it were, into one Point. Whatever becomes of this Question, I am assured you will thank me for the Copies I send you; and that after you have perus'd these Letters, you will have a fresh Pleasure in giving the other a second Reading, as it contains the Solution of the Difficulties propos'd in these. *See page 351*

*An Account of a Conversation with a*  
D E I S T.

## L E T T E R I.

S I R,

**I** Was the other day in Company, where I chanced to meet with a Gentleman till then unknown to me, who seem'd to be a Foreigner. I understood by his Discourse that he had been a great Traveller. The several Questions asked him concerning his Travels, gave him occasion to talk pretty much; but no one could find

find out what Religion he profess'd. One of the Gentlemen had the Curiosity to ask him. I am, said he, an *honest Man*; my Travels have disabused me of all other Religion. You are to know, by the way, that the Company was compos'd partly of *Roman Catholics*, and partly of *Protestants*. Both were equally surpriz'd at this Answer. It even occasion'd silence for some moments; no-body was willing to be the first that called on him to explain himself. An *Officer* told him with a low Voice, that he might have kept his Thoughts to himself; that such a Declaration gave several Persons room for entertaining disadvantageous Ideas of him. I think, answer'd he, that every honest Man may be allow'd to say what he thinks, and appear what he really is. I have no great Esteem for those *hidden* Gentlemen, whose real Sentiments it is impossible to know.

This bold manner of delivering himself, inspir'd the rest of the Company with Courage. Are you, says an *Abbot*, one of those whom we call *Atheists*? No, answers the Stranger, I acknowledge a *Deity*. You are a *Deist* then, replied the *Abbot*. A *Deist*, if you please, says the Stranger. I am come to that, after having carefully enquir'd into all the Religions in the World.

How! replied an *Abbot*; did the Christian Religion appear unworthy of your Choice? But, says the Stranger, where shall I find it? A pretty Question! replies the *Abbot*; doth not the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Religion bear all the Marks of it? Hold there, Sir, says a *Protestant*; those Marks belong to the Reformed Religion: It is entirely founded on the Holy Scripture. What Heresy! replied the *Abbot*; the Holy Scripture entirely on your side! It seems to favour you, only as you wrest it to serve your Turn. A *Lawyer*, who was present, asked the Stranger, whether he admitted of the Testimony of Scripture. What is the Scripture, says our Traveller? What sort of Language doth it speak? One assures me it says *White*, where others maintain it says *Black* \*. Which of them must I believe? This

Con-

\* This is the common Language of the *Deists*. The Contradictions,

Contradiction at last open'd my Eyes. I concluded that the Case is the same in regard to the Scripture, as it is in regard to the Sound of Bells; each Man makes it speak what he thinks proper. Since the Gentleman sets no value on the Authority of Scripture, replied the *Lawyer*, it wou'd be in vain to urge it against him; I think the shortest way wou'd be to end the Dispute here.

Every one was not of his opinion. They ought not to let slip an Opportunity of converting an *Infidel*, a *Deist*; but the difficulty was, to find some competent Authority. That of Scripture was not such; some other must be thought of. This seem'd impossible; so that they were reduced to the necessity of giving up the Project, and leaving the *Deist* to himself.

This Scene occasion'd the following.

The *Deist* having taken his leave, the Company took full liberty with his Character. They bewail'd the misery of the times, in which Irreligion dares appear openly, and barefaced. In return to this, the *Officer* observ'd, that if Irreligion is to be fear'd, 'tis that which several Persons conceal under the Character of a Christian, much rather than that of a Man, who has the Courage to pass for a *Deist*, and thus gives every one an Opportunity of being on his guard: that Sentiments, *secretly insinuated* by Men, of whom we have no mistrust, more certainly produce their Effect, than such as are *openly* declared. That, at least, it is a piece of Honesty not to attempt to deceive others. Some were of his opinion; and the *Lawyer*, among others, seconded him.

It was then enquired, what Method was to be taken for converting Persons of this Class. One was for beginning with proving the *Divinity* of the Scripture. Very well, says the *Lawyer*; when that is performed, shall we have made much progress in the Work? The  
diffi-

tions, which they find between the different Opinions among Christians, embolden them to declare against the Scripture. They do not observe, that the Scripture is only the *Occasion*, not the *Cause* of such *Contradictions*.

difficulty will still be to determine the *Sense* of it. If this is not done, the *Deist* will reason thus.

I grant, says he, that the Scripture is *Divine*: that, consequently, it has some *Divine Sense*. Have you found this *Sense*? If you have, it ought to *reconcile* and *unite* you. If you have not, what use can you make of the *Divinity* of a *Book*, while you are ignorant of the *Sense* of it \*?

Some of the Company flew into a Passion at this Discourse. They began to suspect both the *Lawyer* and the *Officer*; and after a pretty long Dispute, they parted with mutual Dissatisfaction.

What had passed gave me room for Reflection. I shall not at present tell you every particular, that offer'd itself to my Mind, concerning the *Chaos* or Confusion which reigns among Christians. I chuse rather to communicate to you a Conversation I had the next day with the *Deist*, whom I met by chance.

I laid hold of this Opportunity to engage him to explain himself thoroughly. He answer'd my Questions with abundance of Frankness. Among other things, he told me that the too great Care he had taken to discover which among all the Christian Religions is the *true one* †, was the Cause of his being actually without Religion; or, at least, of his being reduced to *Natural Religion*.

I desired he wou'd let me know what had most contributed towards fixing him there? It was, says he, the *Contradiction* I found in all Christian Societies, not only the Division which separates them into so many op-

\* In reality, doubting of the Divinity of the Scripture is not what divides Christian Societies; all unanimously acknowledge this. The *opposite Senses*, which they imagine they find in it, is the only Source of their Contests; and those *opposite Senses*, are what serve the *Deists* as a *Pretext* for rejecting all use of the Scripture itself.

† When a Man sets out on some Principle without Foundation, he is infallibly led into *false Consequences*. The *Deist* supposes one Society of Christians ought to be *the only true one*, exclusive of all others. After all his Enquiries, he cannot meet with what he seeks for. Hence he concludes that *the true is no where to be found*.

*posite Bodies*; but the Division of each *Society* within itself into *Parties*, which it is impossible to reconcile.

Those who hold *Predetermination*, and those who maintain *Universal Grace*, mutually charge each other with overthrowing the sound Doctrine, and wristing the Scripture; while each Party pretends to have found the true Sense of it.

If we believe the former, according to their Interpretation of Scripture, the Deity will be *partial*: will have destined an infinitely larger number of his Creatures to *eternal Torments*, than to Happiness: He will punish those unhappy Creatures for Crimes which they could not avoid. If we may credit the latter, the Deity *would* the Salvation of all Men, he employs every thing in his power for producing that Effect; but *cannot* perform it. After all the Care he has taken, the number of miserable Creatures will be infinitely greater than that of the happy.

Thus far the two Parties are agreed; they are divided only on the *Cause* of so terrible an Effect.

The first place it in the *positive Will* of GOD, who, say they, has a right to form *Vessels* for *Perdition*. The second attribute it to a sort of *Impotency*: the Deity miscarries in the Designs he had formed for the Happiness of his Creatures. At this rate what sort of a Deity would that of the Christians be? If the *Idea* of GOD is really the *Basis* of Religion, what sort of Religion must it be that is established on such *Ideas*?

All these Contradictions, and many more, which each Party pretends are grounded on the same *Scripture*, have induced me to allow it no Attention; to give over all use of a Book which contains Difficulties \*, insuperable even to such as are best versed in it.

This Discourse almost struck me dumb; and to change the Subject a little, I ask'd him, whether he had met with many in this way of thinking. Great numbers, replied he; there are several who go still farther, and give into *Pyrrhonism*. But very few of ei-

\* Here again he goes on a groundless Supposition.



therefore care to pass for what they are; *Interest* is a Barrier they cannot pass. They subject themselves by *Gratitude*, to what others do out of devotion: They have one Language for the *Public*, another for *Private* Conversation. This, continued he, is a Baseness and Cowardice, which I have always abhorred. It is unworthy of an *honest Man* to act the *Comedian*, particularly where Religion is concerned.

From some other things he said, I understood that the Appellation of *Christian* serves as a covering and *Asylum* to all sorts of Characters. I found that this Gentleman distinguished himself from others by an uncommon Frankness; that there is a sort of greatness of Soul, in venturing to incur the Disesteem of all who call themselves Christians, and have no patience with any Person of a different Denomination. I thought it a very melancholy Reflection, that a Man of so good a *Heart* should be so strongly prejudiced, that there is but little room for hoping to reclaim him.

## *The Sequel of the Story of the DEIST.*

### L E T T E R II.

S I R,

**I** Have had no less Curiosity than you concerning our *Deist*; I talk'd with him yesterday on several Subjects, which gave him an Opportunity of relating Part of his own History. I will not undertake to give you the Particulars of it at present; that will be done better by Word of Mouth. It is sufficient that I tell you, that many Years Travels in several Countries, and among different People, have afforded him an Opportunity of making an exact Enquiry into Religion, or rather into the different Systems of Religion, which prevail in each Country.

In every Country, said he, we find Men of Sense and Learning; Men who are Masters of the Art of Reasoning,

soning, and who, when heard separately, seem'd to argue very justly. Wherever I went, I sought the Acquaintance of Men of this Class. I propos'd to hear the Reasons on both sides, being myself intirely *Neuter*, and then espouse the Party, whose Arguments proved the strongest \*. Here my Case was like that of an unexperienced Judge; the last Pleadings they hear, appear to them unanswerable, 'till another is produced which carries the Prize. Thus by Arguments which seem'd to me demonstrative, I was oblig'd to admit of contrary Opinions successively. A Success so different from what a Man might naturally expect, who is in quest of Truth, discouraged me so, that I was resolv'd to hear no more of it †. Truth always giving me the slip, when I imagin'd I had found it, I was tempted to think that *Truth* or *Religion* was a mere *Chimæra*. At last I gave into *Pyrrhonism*, and concluded that there is nothing fixt or certain, that all things are equally *problematical* ‡, that the *True* and the *False* depend on the manner of Reasoning.

I met with several Persons in the same way of thinking; and some well-written Books confirm'd me in it. I amus'd myself with reading such Pieces during a long Voyage. The Captain of the Ship, with whom I frequently convers'd, began to come into my Notions;

\* Here again the *Deist* proceeds on false Principles, or ill-grounded Suppositions. He begins with supposing that the *True* is peculiar to one Party only. He then supposes, that the most seemingly strong Arguments are the only Demonstration of the *True*. These Suppositions lead him to Conclusions still more false.

† This Conclusion is very much like that of an honest Man, who had been cheared by *Tartuffe*; *From this time, I renounce the Acquaintance of all good Men.*

‡ The Art of Reasoning may indeed make all Things appear equally *problematical*; but it doth not thence follow that they are really so. Men, who know how to view *Things* in their *Origin*, do not permit themselves to be dazzled with *specious Arguments*. On the other hand, such as are acquainted with no other *Evidence* than what arises from a long Train of Arguments, depend more or less on the Abilities of those whom they hear argue. They are often reduced to the necessity of successively espousing *Contraries* or *Opposites*. This appears from the *Deists* Experience.

and

and I was very near making him a Profelyte to *Pyrrhonism*.

But a violent Storm, which put us in imminent danger of Shipwreck, made my most persuaſive Arguments vaſiſh. It was then no time for doubting of the Exiſtence of a GOD, for conſidering the Language of *Confidence* as a *Chimæra*, for ſilencing it by Arguments in form, or artful Turns; its Authority was ſet by intolerable Reproaches, which ſilenced every other Language. I my ſelf was ſtung with Remorſe for having done the Captain ſo ill an Office, and was obliged to let him know it, in order, if poſſible, to repair the Injury I might have done him. I found him entirely undeceived: He told me the Storm and the Impreſſion it had left on his Mind, had had more Force on him than all the Eloquence of my Books.

Thus, from a *Pyrrhoniſt*, I became what you call a *Deiſt*.

I then aſked him whether he never after that time had the Curioſity to make a farther Enquiry into Religion, and read the Holy Scripture. More than once, replied he: But the Fear of falling back into a *Chaos* of Contradictions, which perhaps would have brought me once more into *Pyrrhoniſm*, made me ſtop where I am. I find, after all, that it is better for me to ſtick to a ſmall Number of *undoubted* Principles, which depend on no Book, than to be agitated by an infinity of Opinions taken from the ſame Book, which often contradict one another, or prove the Sources of Contradictions.

Here I aſked him, whether he admitted a *Providence* among his Principles. The Idea, ſays he, that I entertain of a Deity, who can do what he pleaſes, and muſt love his own Work, would perſuade me that he cannot abandon it to blind Chance. This Sentiment ſeems to me as indelible as that of a Deity. But the Moment I pretend to judge of it by the Event, and reaſon on the ſtate of Things, on the Diſorder I ſee through the whole World, that *firſt Idea*, or Sentiment

ment disappears; I lose all Ideas of Providence\*.

What do you think, said I, of *the Immortality of the Soul*? Is that one of the Principles you espouse? I can never persuade my self, answer'd he, that every thing ends with the present Life. A profound Sentiment told me the contrary†, even when I most strove to silence it. I own I have no *distinct Idea* of the *State* of the *Life to come*, and that the Opinions of Divines of different Persuasions, instead of giving me any Satisfaction in that Point, have shock'd me to the last degree.

Among other Opinions, that of *Eternal Damnation* has not a little contributed toward giving me an Aversion to the Christian Religion. What encreased my Surprise, was to find Christians, though *divided* on several other Points, *united* in this. An Opinion so injurious to the Deity, so contrary to all Ideas of *natural Equity*, was much more proper for making me a *Pyrrhonist*, than a good Man. This, however, is the *Refraint*, as they term it, which they pretend deters Men from Vice. They undertake to make Men virtuous by the Idea of a *cruel, implacable and unjust* Deity. The Event must show how well this Pretence has succeeded.

I then observed to him that the the Doctrine of *Eternal Damnation* had been long called in question by several judicious Protestants: that I had heard talk of a *Book* lately published, which undertakes to establish

\* This confirms the Observations made in the fourth and fifth Letters. When this Man consults the Idea he entertains of the Attributes of the perfect Being, he there finds the Idea of a *Providence*. It is impossible for him to doubt it, while he stops at that Point. But the Moment he attempts to reconcile the *Detail* of Events with that *first Idea*, he is bewilder'd. He is then tempted to doubt of what he had before received as indisputable.

† The Ideas, we naturally entertain of a Life to come, are rather *negative* than *positive*. A Man like this freely owns he has no distinct Ideas of the State of the other World. Tell him you know more of the Matter, that Revelation has given you a light into it, that it plainly tells us some Men will be eternally happy, others eternally miserable; you thus inspire him with a new Prejudice, and furnish him with a strong Objection against a Religion so contrary to all Ideas of natural Equity. He immediately declares this would be unjust.

contrary Opinion by good Proofs. Had you not quarrell'd with all the Books written by Christians on Religion, continued I, I would undertake to show it you. I might, replied he, read it out of Curiosity; but do not think it would have any Persuasion for me. Do you think this Work has any Patrons? It is not yet known, replied I, what Reception the Book will meet with from the Public. There is good reason to believe the Vulgar will be startled at it.

We afterward talked on other Subjects; and I had an Opportunity of observing, that since the fortunate Storm, which awakened the Sense of *Truth* or the *Language* of *Conscience* within him, he had show'd it much Respect. I found that he directed that way all the Care and Application which others employ in the Practices required by their Religion.

Methinks, said I, taking my leave of him, in spite of all the Aversion you profess for the Christian Religion, you retain the *true Principles* of it, and consequently would be more proper for becoming a Christian, if you are not already so, than the Generality of those who imagine themselves Christians.

How is it possible, said he, that I should become a Christian? I have but too well examined the different Religions of Christians. In all probability the Christian Religion has undergone no Change; and I shall still meet with the same Contradictions I have formerly found in it\*. Let me hear no more of it, continued he; I am apprehensive of the Rock of *Pyrrhonism*, on which the View of so many Contradictions once threw me.

But, said I, supposing I should observe to you that the *different Religions* of Christians and the *Christian Religion* are two things: If it were demonstrated to you, that this contains not the Contradictions which you attribute to it, and that it was always free from them: if it was made evident to you that you have not been startled at IT, but at the *false Representations* given you of it: should I farther tell you, that you re-

\* As he all along builds on the same Supposition, his Conclusions are always the same.

spect it in the main, even while you seem to despise it: I own, answer'd he, that I would not believe one Word of the matter, 'till it is proved by Experience. Here we parted, and I have not seen him since.

I met a Friend to whom I communicated what had passed. He seem'd surpris'd to hear of so much Honesty in a *Deist*; and we agreed that Men are frequently termed *Deists*, who at the bottom are *Pyrrhonists*.

The Story of our Traveller gave us an opportunity of observing the difference between the *Incredulity* of Persons of those two Characters; *Incredulity* becomes criminal not by *Want of Evidence*, but by *wilfully shutting the Eyes against it*. We look'd on the Case last mentioned to be that of the *Pyrrhonist*, as the first is that of the *Deist*.

The *Pyrrhonist*, in order to support his Doubts, is obliged to take some pains for obfuscating the Idea of a GOD, and deafening himself to the Language of Conscience, as well as to that of all Nature. An *Evidence* of this kind is so *inevitable*, that a Man cannot be honest, who pretends to avoid it.

The *Evidence*, which the *Deist* seeks, is of a different nature. He requires Information concerning the Christian Religion: the Contrariety and Opposition, found in Christian Societies, give birth to his Doubts; and the *opposite* Senses, given by those Societies to the Scripture, are the Cause of his Aversion to it.

I think, said my Friend, that the *Necromancer's* Narrative \* might help us to an Explication of the *Deist's* Case. In order to read the *Book of Light*, he has tried all the several sorts of *Glasses*, made in the gloomy Country. By the help of some, he has seen *White*, through others *Black*. Hence 'tis concluded that the *Book* itself is full of Contradictions, and authorises both the *Pro* and the *Con*. He never once suspected that the Contradictions were only in the *Glasses*. He would certainly change his Notions, if he endeavour'd to see things with his own Eyes. Thus ended our Discourse.

\* Dialogue XVII.

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